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## Early childhood teachers' perceptions of their leadership roles

Glenda Boyd  
*Edith Cowan University*

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**EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR  
LEADERSHIP ROLES**

by

**Glenda Boyd**

**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the  
Requirements for the Award of  
Doctor of Philosophy.**

**At the Faculty of Community Services, Education and Social Sciences,  
Edith Cowan University.**

**Date of submission: November, 2001**

## **ABSTRACT**

Early childhood education has long been regarded as having the lowest status in the education system. Recent government reforms in Australia based on financial rather than education concerns means early childhood education will continue to face declines in status, conditions and appropriate resources, unless educators exercise leadership skills in advocating for appropriate programs and curriculum for young children.

A new model of Early Childhood Teacher Leadership was created to measure leadership skills, including leadership in advocating for young children, and tested in Phase One of the study. The model involved General Leadership (Classroom Leadership, Self-directed Leadership, Program Leadership and School Leadership), Communication (from me to principal /parents /teachers and from principal /parents /teachers to me), and Influences (my influence on the school, my influence on the principal). In Phase Two of the study, twenty early childhood teachers were interviewed for approximately one hour in regard to how they conceptualised their leadership roles, what factors enhanced or constrained their leadership, and what strategies they used to communicate their philosophy and pedagogy.

Phase One involved collecting data from 270 Early Childhood Teachers in Western Australia at government schools, using self-reports on ideal and real aspects of leadership obtained through a questionnaire. A Rasch measurement model computer program was used to create an interval level Scale of Early Childhood Teacher Leadership from the original 142 items (71 real and 71 ideal). The final interval-level scale consisted of 92 items (38 real and 54 ideal) that had a reasonable fit to the model, where the thresholds were ordered and the proportion of observed variance considered true was 94 percent. The Rasch analysis supported the structure of the leadership model and indicated some improvements could be made.

Written responses to open-ended questions at the end of the questionnaire provided insights into how the teachers conceptualised their leadership roles. These insights provided the framework for the formulation of the face-to-face follow-up

interviews that comprised Phase Two of the study. The findings indicate that, as expected, teachers found it easier to hold higher ideal self-views for most aspects of leadership than to hold high real self-views. Teachers recognised the importance of leadership skills but experienced difficulty in enacting them. The Early Childhood Teachers reported various factors that helped or hindered them in fulfilling their leadership roles. The four global factors that could either help or hinder Early Childhood Teachers were 1) intrapersonal and interpersonal skills; 2) professional confidence; 3) others' understanding of and respect for early childhood education; and 4) time. The Early Childhood Teachers suggested strategies that could help them develop stronger leadership skills. The four main strategies suggested by the teachers were 1) professional development addressing leadership and interpersonal and intrapersonal skills training; 2) inclusion of leadership skills training at pre-service levels of teacher education; 3) opportunities to collaborate with other staff; and 4) public promotion of early childhood education. The findings have implications for Early Childhood Teachers, administrators, teacher educators and for future research.

## DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not to the best of my knowledge and belief:

- (i) incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;
- (ii) contain any material previously written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; or
- (iii) contain any defamatory material.

Signature

Date 25 March 2002



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My grateful thanks are extended to the teachers who generously gave their time to participate in the study through pilot tests, completing the questionnaire and being willing subjects of face-to-face interviews. Their cooperation and involvement has provided valuable knowledge and insight into the dimensions of leadership in early childhood education.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the reader to the notion of teacher leadership, then more specifically, teacher leadership in early childhood programs with particular regard to articulating and communicating early childhood philosophy and pedagogy. Following the introduction, the background to the study and its relevance is discussed. Next, the research questions and aims are presented, and some terms used in the study are defined. Finally, the structure of the thesis is outlined, providing a brief overview of each chapter.

The notion of leadership has been discussed and analysed from various perspectives since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Leadership has been examined within, and applied across, such contexts as business, government and education. The literature has focussed on varying aspects such as leadership roles, and the personal traits and behaviours of effective leaders (for example, see Depree, 1989; Hodgkinson, 1991; Manske, 1990; Morgan, 1997; Smith & Piele, 1989). A traditional view of leadership has been formed in terms of one person, or a select few, within an organisation leading subordinates. More recently, however, there has been a shift in focus towards the concept of *shared* or *collaborative* leadership. Others have described the shift in terms of a move from a transactional to transformational style of leadership. Whichever term is used to describe the shift, it is a more inclusive form of leadership with more broad-based participation from members within an organisation (for example, see Cousins, 1996; Hargreaves, 1994; Hodgkinson, 1991; Lambert, 1998; Leithwood & Poplin, 1992; Morgan, 1997). It is this notion that "everyone has the potential and right to work as a leader" (Lambert, 1998, p. 18) that forms the perspective of this thesis with respect to teacher leadership in early childhood education. This means that, in addition to principals, deputy principals and other school staff, early childhood teachers also have a role to play in leadership within the school context.

## **Teacher leadership**

The literature in the area of teacher leadership has evolved in three stages or waves as described by Silva, Gimbert and Nolan (2000). Although these waves have been documented from an American context, parallels can be drawn to corresponding waves of teacher leadership in other countries, including Australia. The first wave of teacher leadership encompassed leadership roles being created for teachers in positions such as head teachers. However, the realization that these positions focussed on efficient systems at the expense of leadership in the area of instruction, led to the second wave of teacher leadership. Leadership positions in the second wave included staff development, curriculum and team leaders. Eventually though, came the realization that leadership from outside the classroom was not effective and thus the present third wave has emerged. The notion of teacher leadership in the third wave encompasses teachers "who lead from within the classroom on behalf of students" (Silva, Gimbert & Nolan, 2000, p. 2). This means teachers are required to exercise leadership through being an advocate, ensuring that the children in their care are immersed in an appropriate teaching and learning environment. Whilst this third wave of teacher leadership is clearly evolving, Silva, Gimbert and Nolan (2000) suggested there is a dearth of research from the third wave perspective, with little known about the leadership roles, knowledge and skills required, or indeed how teachers experience leadership within a school setting. A similar claim has been made with specific regard to leadership in early childhood care and education with the need for investigation of different work contexts and the "barriers and opportunities" for development of leadership within these contexts (Kagan & Bowman, 1997). Both these claims echo the call from Howe (1994, p. 3283) who called for more research on educational leadership from different countries and "at different levels of a school system".

Recent literature in the area of teacher leadership has emphasised that a major role of teachers is to extend their work and philosophy beyond their own classroom and ultimately work to improve their profession and achieve reform in schools (Barnett, McKowen & Bloom, 1998; Creighton, 1997; Fullan, 1994; Troen & Boles, 1996; Witcher, 2001). Improvement and reform can be made, in part, through challenging the status quo and taking responsibility for changing the conditions of learning so they may become more satisfying for all stakeholders within a school

system (Fullan, 1994). Taking such action, however, requires some courage from teachers and a willingness to take risks (Espinosa, 1997; Wasley, 1991; Whitebook, 1997). In order to improve the profession of education, Fullan (1994, p. 252) asserts “teachers must be proactive in the face of criticism” and develop the knowledge and confidence to “explain themselves” both inside and out of the school setting.

Important as it is for the general teaching profession to be proactive and confident in articulating their practice, there has been no more crucial time than the present for early childhood educators to exercise leadership in articulating and communicating their early childhood pedagogy and philosophy. Alongside educational reforms there has been calls for increasing collaboration and shared leadership in schools with the aim of improving teaching and learning knowledge and practice, and achieving reform goals (Fullan, 1994; Fullan, 1996; Hargreaves & Evans, 1997; Sarason, 1995; Wasley, 1991). However, for many teachers there are systemic barriers that hinder true collaboration (Corrie, 2000b; Firestone, 1996; Hargreaves, 1994; Wallace, 1999).

### **Leadership in early childhood programs**

For early childhood teachers in Australia, reforms have meant their philosophy and pedagogy is in the minority in schools. More formalised curriculum and assessment policies are being promoted by principals and staff from the primary grades who have little understanding of early childhood philosophy and pedagogy (David, 1993; French & Pena, 1997; Gifford, 1993). Such formalised instruction and curriculum focussed on academic outcomes have the potential to harm children, increasing their stress and limiting learning opportunities (Burts, Hart, Charlesworth, Fleege, Mosley & Thomasson, 1992; Hart, Burts, Durland, Charlesworth, DeWolf & Fleege, 1998; Hills, 1987; Schweinhart & Weikart, 1998). In order to be an advocate for young children and appropriate programs in this context, early childhood practitioners must be confident to articulate and communicate their philosophy and pedagogy. They must be able to “articulate the whys, hows and wherefores of their teaching approach” (Ebbeck, 1990, p. 91).

For over a decade early childhood practitioners have been urged to adopt a leadership role in order to advocate on behalf of young children (Blank, 1997; Ebbeck, 1990; Fleece, 1996; Hills, 1987; Rodd, 1994; Waniganayake, 1998).

Leadership in early childhood education will promote developmentally, culturally and contextually appropriate programs and raise the status of the early childhood profession in a proactive way. Six specific areas requiring leadership in early childhood education have been identified as: 1) pedagogical, 2) management, 3) advocacy, 4) community, 5) conceptual, and 6) career development (see Kagan & Bowman, 1997; Taba, Castle, Vermeer, Hanchett, Flores & Caulfield, 1999). However, in the present study the focus area of leadership is advocacy. For the purpose of this research, leadership in early childhood education encompasses the view that practitioners should assume responsibility for being an advocate for young children and appropriate programs. Early childhood programs may be in settings that incorporate an education or care context and include daycare, preschool, family centre or pre-primary settings. Early childhood teachers who demonstrate leadership within these contexts are able to articulate key principles underpinning early childhood philosophy and pedagogy, and communicate these principles effectively to parents, other professionals and the wider community (Cassidy & Lawrence, 2000). These key principals are outlined later in the chapter within the definition of appropriate early childhood pedagogy.

A traditional view of leadership in early childhood programs is centred on the notion of a person being responsible for such roles as program administration; supervision and support of staff; team building; and development and communication of a vision (Irvine, 1986; Simons, 1986). This notion has been developed around the role of a director or coordinator of a daycare centre or perhaps teacher-in-charge, principal or supervisor of an early childhood or junior primary setting. For the purpose of the present research, however, a more recent view of leadership is taken. Leadership from this view emerges from the 'third wave' perspective and is focussed at the classroom level and beyond, where teachers of young children (aged three to five years) exercise specific leadership skills such as articulating and communicating early childhood pedagogy and philosophy.

In broad terms, Rodd (1994, p. 2) defined leadership as "a process by which one person sets certain standards and expectations and influences the actions of others to behave in what is considered a desirable direction". This definition can be viewed from the perspective of a principal who may influence the early childhood teacher to behave in what the principal considers to be a desirable manner. Or

conversely, the definition can be viewed from the early childhood teacher's perspective which may be to endeavour to influence the principal or other school staff to behave in a desired way, namely, to accommodate the teacher's early childhood pedagogy and philosophy. Considered from these limited perspectives however, this definition does not take into account the notion of shared leadership. From another angle, Fullan and Hargreaves (1992, p. 21) defined teacher leadership as "the capacity and commitment to contribute beyond one's own classroom". The inherent elements of both these definitions, that is, the acts of contributing beyond the classroom and influencing others, can be considered to encompass shared leadership if the following behaviours are incorporated: convening and facilitating dialogue; posing inquiry questions; coaching one another; mentoring a new teacher; and inviting others to become engaged with a new idea (Lambert, 1998, p. 18).

Research on leadership in early childhood programs has identified some 'essential' qualities of a leader. Qualities identified consistently include skills of effective communication and advocacy (Freeman & Brown, 2000; Goffin, 1988; Goodman, 1981; Hayden, 1996; Hostetler, 1981; Katz, 1995a; Lewis, Schiller, & Duffie, 1992; Moyles, 1996; Rodd, 1987; Sebastian, Nickell & Milne, 1992; Stonehouse, 1992). More recently, Scutt (1992) and Kagan (1994) highlighted the need to reinforce a cooperative, consultative or shared leadership style in early childhood programs. Creating and communicating a vision of what early childhood education should be has also been identified as necessary in order to foster high quality education for young children (Espinosa, 1997; Hayden, 2000; Kagan, 1999).

Advocacy is an important purpose of leadership (Boles and Davenport, 1975; Kagan & Bowman, 1997), and in the present study, advocacy for young children is a particular focus. Advocacy in this sense has been referred to by others as 'raising children's voices' (for example, see Silva, Gimbert and Nolan, 2000). In order to advocate effectively, a teacher needs to possess skills to articulate and communicate early childhood philosophy and pedagogy. It is important for practitioners at the 'grass roots' level to grasp opportunities for exercising leadership within their school context Rodd (1994), with a view to being an advocate for the early childhood profession and raising its status within the community. A raise in status of the profession may mean advocacy for young children will be more effective (Moyer, 1992; Sebastian-Nickel & Milne, 1992; Stonehouse, 1992; Whitebook, 1997).

However, before practitioners can advocate for young children and the profession, they must believe it is important and possess a desire to be a leader in this manner (Duke, 1994; Kolb, 1999). Early childhood teachers must also possess a sense of self-leadership and empowerment to direct their own life (Rinehart, Short, Short & Eckley, 1998; Rodd, 1997a; Stone, 1995).

Fleer (1996, p. 6) posed the question "How can we be proactive and raise our profession within the broader community as well as within education generally?" One way for early childhood practitioners to raise the status of the profession is to acquire the skills to articulate and communicate early childhood pedagogy. In order to be proactive (as opposed to being reactive and simply responding to the views of others), in advocacy for young children and the early childhood profession, practitioners should feel confident to articulate key principles of early childhood education. In the following sections, background information is provided on the situation and context of early childhood education within society and educational settings.

## **Background to the study**

### **A low status profession**

Early childhood teachers have long been regarded as having the lowest status in the education system or "academic pecking order", behind primary, secondary and tertiary teachers. A major factor contributing to this perception is the traditionally assigned low status of women and young children in society (Cannella, 1997; Finkelstein, 1988; Riehl & Lee, 1996; Schools Council National Board of Employment, Education and Training, 1992). An additional factor is the notion of close association of mothering to early childhood education that society has perpetuated (Brennan, 1994; Petrie, 1992; Scutt, 1992; Weiss, 1989). To compound this perception of low status, there has been diminishing "system –provided" education services and support (Harman, Beare & Berkeley, 1991). Specifically in early childhood education in Australia, there has been a decline in the provision of early childhood specialist support and advisory positions within the education system (Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, 1996). In some universities, pressures have resulted in the erosion of early childhood as a

specialist field, with the reduction of staff and combining of early childhood units with primary and secondary education (Fleer & Waniganayake, 1994; Gifford, 1993; Stonehouse & Woodrow, 1992; Vaughan & Cahir, 1996).

In Australia, restructuring reforms in education have been based on political considerations with a strong focus on economics rather than concerns for educational benefits or equity (Chadbourne & Ingvarson, 1992; Harman, Beare & Berkeley, 1991; Roberston, 1996; Sarason, 1990;). From a perspective of gender, Zeichner (1991, p. 366) suggested teaching is 'gendered work' and that

Work dominated by women has been particularly vulnerable to the kind of rationalization and standardization seen in teaching.

The decline of resources into early childhood education in Australia can be viewed as part of recent government reforms that are based on economics, resulting in significant cuts to education in general. Others, however, view the decline in resources more specifically as part of the government's agenda to merge early childhood with primary education (Battersby & Sparrow, 1992; Corrie, 2000a; McLean, Piscitelli, Halliwell & Ashby, 1992).

The low status of early childhood education in Australia is reflected in government policy and initiatives. Ochiltree (1993) suggested that government policy and resources have directed more funds to the youth of Australia rather than the younger children. Ochiltree argued that intervention is most effective in early childhood but it attracts the least money from the government. In addition, input from early childhood professionals into government reports has been very limited (Battersby & Sparrow, 1992; Gifford, 1993; Lewis, Schiller & Duffie, 1992; Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, 1996). Several researchers have noted that Government reports such as the *Ebbeck Report* (Australian Education Council, 1990) did not acknowledge early childhood education as a specialist field or distinct from primary education. It may be concluded that early childhood education is losing its voice, as the few specialist leadership or advisory positions, and resources in general allocated to early childhood education, are on the decline.

## **Pressure on early childhood education**

Gifford (1993, p. 17) suggested that early childhood educators are "...struggling to teach in developmentally appropriate ways within the often unsympathetic school environment" and warned that flow-on pressure from the early primary grades to the pre-primary level encourages a focus on school readiness skills. School readiness skills include specific early literacy, cognitive and physical skills. However, a report from the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce, *Start Right* (Ball Report, 1994) identified that the most important learning in preschool settings involved "aspiration, task commitment, social skills and feelings of efficacy" (p. 94). David (1993, p. 5) urged reflection on the notion of school readiness by considering "whether it appears that each society expects its youngest children to be prepared for and adapted to the primary school, or the primary school for the children". The conflict between the preparation of young children for their first year of school and early childhood pedagogical beliefs such as the importance of children learning through play, has been evident since the early days of public kindergartens (Cuban, 1992). However, current research still urges the early childhood practitioner to resist curriculum centred teaching and embrace child initiated learning which is agreed to be the most effective way to support children's development (for example see Hart, Burts, Durland, Charlesworth, DeWolf & Fleege, 1998; Makin, 1996; Sweinhart & Weikart, 1998; Tayler, 1998; Tayler, Diezmann, Broughton, & Henry, 2000).

The culture of a school can exert pressure on teachers and influence their pedagogy. For example, teachers' self images can be altered by the context and culture in which they work (Hawkey, 1996). The culture of a school can cause teachers to teach in conflict with their personal ideals (Bullough, 1987), which results in teachers either adapting to the dominant view or leaving the school (Corrie, 1996). In a study of early childhood practitioners, Wien (1995) found systematic constraints and lack of knowledge about developmentally appropriate practice contributed to teachers swinging from a child centred (termed developmental appropriateness) focus to a teacher centred (termed teacher dominion) focus.

Working with young children is regarded as a specialist area by those within the field, but perceptions outside the field differ. Differences in perception have been attributed, in part, to the failure of early childhood educators to communicate



their understandings to others who have not had the same specialist education in early childhood (David, 1993). Indeed Halliwell (1990a) suggested early childhood educators use the same words as colleagues from primary grades but assign different meaning to these words. Through using the same language, yet assigning and failing to communicate its different meaning, early childhood teachers are risking losing the specialised field of early childhood pedagogy and philosophy. Early childhood teachers who work within a K-12 curriculum framework need to be able to communicate their meanings to principals, and to other teachers working in the primary grades who may represent the majority (Halliwell, 1990a). Considered from a broader perspective, it is also important for teachers to communicate their philosophy and pedagogy to children's parents and the wider community in order to foster an increase in understanding of early childhood education.

### **Relevance of the study**

#### **Early childhood in the school context**

Prior to recent reforms in Western Australia, early childhood practitioners experienced a large degree of organisational autonomy. Previously, the teacher was responsible for planning and administering the early childhood program. However, as a result of reforms, many teachers work in primary schools where they experience varying degrees of autonomy. The principal's role creates dilemmas for some teachers with some principals taking a more direct role in relation to planning and administering the early childhood program. In addition, it is recognised that principals can exert influence over teachers with contributions to school climate and norms and the amount of administrative support given to teachers (Lieber, Beckman, Hanson, Janko, Marquart, Horn & Odom, 1997; Wasley, 1991; Weber, 1989). A study conducted by Stamopoulos (1998) in Western Australian primary schools revealed a difference in perception of administrative, management and educational roles between preprimary teachers and principals. The same study indicated that the majority of principals believed they lacked knowledge of early childhood education and they reported that they needed professional development or training in this area. However, despite this reported lack of knowledge, principals are in a position to influence early childhood programs and are responsible for grading beginning and temporary teachers vying for permanent status or employment.

The “unsympathetic school environment” alluded to by Gifford (1993), may include the isolation experienced by early childhood practitioners. Isolation and individualism of teachers is regarded as being ingrained in the working culture of a school (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992). To compound this general sense of isolation and individualism within schools, early childhood practitioners face additional influences such as being the minority in representation of school staff. Isolation may also be physical with the early childhood amenities set apart from the main school. In addition, early childhood staff are often on the receiving end of blatant ridicule from primary staff. Such ridicule largely centres around the notion of preprimary teachers being ‘baby sitters’ and not ‘real’ teachers (Corrie, 2000a).

In many instances, early childhood staff are competing with teachers from the primary grades for resources and funds. For example, in Australia in the past, many early childhood teachers have implemented programs in purpose built centres and amenities, which included the provision of a generous outdoor play area. However, as a result of reforms, teachers may now find themselves in situations where they are required to implement an early childhood program within a diminished space allocation which is often a transportable building. In addition to the constraints of a smaller building, the allocated outdoor area is often reduced, with few funds available to develop an appropriate outdoor learning environment. The provision of inadequate space and amenities for early childhood education reflects little understanding of that which is required to implement a quality program. It may be concluded that it is the government’s agenda to eliminate expensive differences between early childhood and primary programs (Corrie, 1999, 2000a).

The isolation of preprimary staff within a school setting, together with the dilemmas created by the managerial role of principals may perpetuate the fragmentation and disempowerment of early childhood teachers. Government reforms involving movement of early childhood programs to school settings and less resources allocated to preprimary programs, may mean early childhood education will become a victim of economic rationalists. Specialist philosophy and pedagogy of early childhood education may become dominated by pedagogy and philosophy from the primary grades. Thus it is now more important than ever for practitioners to articulate and communicate early childhood pedagogy. Indeed, a descriptor in the *Early Childhood /Generalist Standards* developed by the National Board for

Professional Teaching Standards (2001) stated the following expectation of teachers as an element of Standard VIII - Professional partnerships:

When [teachers] are faced with educationally inappropriate mandates, they can use professional knowledge and standards for ethical practice to articulate their concerns to administrators and policy-makers and to devise creative responses that safeguard the interests of children (p. 57).

Research in the field has noted consistently that, early childhood professionals, as a group, have failed to articulate and communicate effectively their philosophy and pedagogy (Cassidy & Lawrence, 2000; David, 1993; Ebbeck, 1990; McLean, Piscitelli, Halliwell & Ashby, 1992; Spodek, 1988; Stonehouse, 1994). Berliner (1986) too, suggested that teachers (both experienced and novice) often lacked the ability to articulate their theories of practice. Indeed, Stonehouse (1994, p. 4) suggested most early childhood practitioners know how to enact appropriate pedagogy but have difficulty in explaining why “rationally, confidently and unemotionally”. However, to date, little research has investigated why early childhood practitioners have not developed important leadership skills. In particular, there is a need to identify factors that influence teachers’ abilities to articulate, communicate and enact their early childhood pedagogy. As Ebbeck (1990, p. 93) warned:

The early childhood field will continue to have low conditions, poor status and few resources unless the professionals become more articulate and assertive.

### **Teachers as communicators**

Reflecting trends world wide, there are moves across Australia to raise levels of professionalism within education. Sachs (1998) referred to the moves as initiatives to ‘revitalize’ the teaching profession. This echoed the proposition of Fullan (1996) that ‘reinventing’ teacher professionalism with standards of practice results in further expectations for teacher leadership. Fullan suggested every teacher would be expected to exercise leadership which would mean “transcending the classroom door to new forms of collaboration and partnerships within and outside the school” (p. 703). Given the recent strategy of the Education Department of Western Australia to extend the career path of classroom teachers by introducing a Level 3

structure, it is timely to examine the leadership potential of early childhood educators. Among the skills identified as necessary to perform the role of Level 3 teachers is highly developed communication skills. Effective communication, critical reflection and collaboration are elements of expectations identified in the National Competency Framework for Beginning Teachers (1996) and in existing and draft professional standards frameworks for teachers. For example, Dimension 5 – Teaching involves being a leader of learning- from the *Queensland Standards Framework for Teachers (draft)* includes the following elements:

- Demonstrate a commitment to personal lifelong learning, reflection and sharing;
- Promote and encourage collegial reflection, sharing and dialogue; and
- Foster public awareness and understanding of issues pertinent to children's development and learning (p. 4).

If early childhood practitioners are to meet the standards, in particular, to be critically reflective, work collaboratively and communicate effectively with others, they must be confident to articulate key principles of early childhood education. As Depree (1989, p. 96) stated:

There may be no single thing more important in our efforts to achieve meaningful work and fulfilling relationships than to learn and practice the art of communication.

### **Interpersonal and intrapersonal factors**

Rodd (1987) stressed that communication and interpersonal skills were educators' 'tools of the trade' and that rather than being innate, educators needed to learn effective use of these skills. Rodd asserted that interpersonal skill development would assist the early childhood practitioner to fulfill expected roles which include:

Interacting with children and parents to working with staff members and acting as a public relations agent for the centre and the profession in the community and political arenas (p. 24).

At a latter date, Rodd (1994) highlighted another important aspect of the role of the early childhood practitioner, namely to acquire the skills necessary to "influence and

work effectively with women at all levels and men who may be in positions of authority" (Rodd, 1994, p. 7).

Intrapersonal factors such as the level of self-esteem, confidence and efficacy will also affect a teacher's ability to fulfill these roles (Chemers, Watson & May, 2000; Cherniss, 1998). Confidence is part of the construct of self-concept which Hattie (1992, p. 117) suggested can "guide, mediate and regulate behaviour in various social settings". Pajares (1996, p. 561) suggested that self-concept involves the evaluation of competence to perform a task and the "feelings of self worth associated with the behaviours in question". It follows that self-concept may influence the behaviour of teachers with regard to demonstrating leadership in the school setting.

An important element of interpersonal skill development is assertion. Assertion is defined as "the extent to which one wishes to satisfy her or his own concerns" (Owens, 1987, p. 259). Assertion is also described in the context of standing up for your rights in a win-win approach, or saying what you mean and how you feel, while acknowledging the rights of others (Groundwater-Smith, Cusworth & Dobbins, 1998). Groundwater-Smith et al. (1998) suggested that one of the most common causes of breakdown in communication is assuming everyone knows what we are talking about. Given the isolation of early childhood teachers being a minority in school settings, and the associated pressures, there is a need for teachers to communicate their pedagogy in an assertive manner.

## **Importance**

The importance of this study is grounded in the belief that in the face of educational reforms, early childhood education will continue to face declines in status, conditions and appropriate resources, resulting in less developmentally appropriate programs unless practitioners exercise leadership skills. Such leadership skills incorporate early childhood practitioners becoming more articulate and confident in communicating early childhood pedagogy and philosophy. This study sought to add to knowledge in several ways. A new model of teacher leadership was to be developed and tested using a Rasch measurement program to create an interval level scale of teacher leadership for early childhood teachers. The scale involved teacher leadership measures (early childhood teachers' real and ideal self-views of

their leadership) and item 'difficulties' calibrated on the same scale. To the best of the researchers' knowledge, based on a thorough literature search, this has not been done before in the field of teacher leadership.

It was also intended to obtain further knowledge and insight about early childhood teachers' perceptions of their leadership roles. The study aimed to document teachers' voices on their perceptions of how to overcome the constraints they face and how best to help them develop stronger leadership skills. In particular, in Western Australia where a dearth of research in the field exists, the study sought to enable Western Australian early childhood teachers' voices to be included in the literature. More specifically, the study aimed to answer the following questions, thereby contributing to the conceptualisation of teacher leadership and in particular, adding to knowledge about teacher leadership in early childhood education.

### **Research questions**

1. How do Western Australian kindergarten /preprimary teachers conceptualise their role with regard to leadership in the early childhood setting?

#### **Subsidiary questions**

- What are kindergarten /preprimary teachers' 'ideal' views of their leadership in schools?
  - What are kindergarten /preprimary teachers' 'real' views of their leadership in schools?
2. What factors do kindergarten/preprimary teachers say enhance or constrain their leadership abilities, in particular, their abilities to articulate and communicate what they know and do as early childhood teachers?
  3. What strategies do kindergarten/ preprimary teachers use to explain their pedagogy to principals, staff and children's parents?
  4. Can kindergarten /preprimary teachers' self-views on leadership (based on general leadership, communication and influence) involving 'ideal' and 'real' aspects be modelled and aligned on a scale from 'low' to 'high', using a Rasch Measurement Model? Can the 'difficulties' of the items relating to leadership be aligned on the same scale as the leadership measures from 'easy' to 'hard'?

5. Can a model be devised to explain early childhood teachers' self-views of leadership, based on 'ideal' and 'real' aspects, and on general leadership, communication and influence aspects?

## **Aims**

Closely related to the research questions are the five main aims of the study.

1. To measure early childhood teachers' leadership and calibrate leadership measures and item 'difficulties' on the same scale.
2. To develop a model of early childhood teacher leadership based on General Leadership (classroom leadership, self-leadership, school leadership, and program leadership), Communication (from early childhood teacher to parents /principal /other teachers, from parents /other teachers /principal to early childhood teacher), and Influences (early childhood teacher influence on school, and early childhood teacher influence on principal).
3. To test the model using the RUMM 2010 computer program (Andrich, Sheridan, Lyne, & Luo, 2000).
4. To analyse the psychometric characteristics of the scale.
5. To analyse qualitative data on leadership from the questionnaires and interviews to gain further insights into how early childhood teachers conceptualise their leadership roles.

## **Definition of terms**

### **Early childhood**

In general reference, *early childhood* encompasses the 0 to 8 years span. However, the focus early childhood years in this study are children aged 3 to 5 years, in settings that incorporate an education context, that is, a kindergarten or preprimary setting. In some instances, the abbreviation ECE is used to refer to early childhood education. This is most often contained within direct quotes from the interviews where teachers have used this abbreviation themselves.

Given the diverse settings of research in early childhood (daycare, kindergarten, preprimary), the terms *practitioner*, *teacher* and *early childhood professional* are used interchangeably, largely to minimise repetition. In the general literature, each term refers to a person who has completed some form of training in the early childhood field. This training may include a two-year associate diploma qualification or a teaching qualification of three or more years in early childhood education. However, most subjects for the present study possessed a teaching qualification of three or more years in early childhood education.

### **Appropriate early childhood pedagogy**

What is considered to be appropriate pedagogy in early childhood education is included within the notion of developmentally appropriate practice. For a detailed description, see the revised statement of “Developmentally Appropriate Practice” (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). Consistent with several descriptions of what developmentally appropriate is, Wien (1996, p. 378) identified three elements that are foundational to early childhood curriculum. Developmentally appropriate curriculum is age appropriate, adapted to individual uniqueness, and emergent, or responsive, rather than prescriptive.

Reflecting these elements, Tayler (1998) outlined what constitutes ‘good’ early childhood education, providing principles of practice for high quality programs. Included in these principles were:

1. Play and exploration are central to effective learning;
2. Children develop and learn at different rates and in different ways;
3. Children’s learning is integrated and continuous and closely related to development;
4. Curriculum must build on children’s interests and strengths and reflect common and individual experiences;
5. Curriculum should integrate all learning areas through experiences focused on the whole child;
6. Assessment practices need to suit the level of development of the children; and
7. Early childhood programs are an integral part of the whole school philosophy and organisational structure.



The elements identified by Wien (1996) and the principles outlined by Tayler (1998) encompass the definition of developmentally appropriate early childhood pedagogy for the purposes in this study. However, in light of specific criticism of the child developmental knowledge base of appropriate practice (Goffin, 1996; Katz, 1996a; Lubeck, 1996; Stott & Bowman, 1996), it is important to emphasise that appropriate early childhood pedagogy reflects both cultural and contextual appropriateness.

## **Structure of the thesis**

This thesis is comprised of two phases of data collection and reported in 15 chapters. Phase one (chapters one to eleven) reports on the development and findings of the questionnaire while Phase two (chapters twelve to fifteen) reports on the follow-up interviews and implications of the research.

### **Phase One**

Chapter one introduces the reader to the notion of leadership in early childhood programs with particular regard to articulating and communicating early childhood philosophy and pedagogy. Background to the study is provided and its relevance discussed. The research questions and aims of the study are also presented in this chapter.

Chapter two is the literature review which highlights the consistent call from researchers for early childhood practitioners to articulate and communicate their pedagogy and philosophy. The chapter also identifies factors that may influence teachers' abilities to enact and communicate their early childhood philosophy and pedagogy.

Chapter three presents the theoretical and conceptual framework of the study, beginning with a discussion from a critical theory perspective. Problems with existing teacher leadership scales are highlighted and a new model of early childhood teacher is proposed.

Chapter four discusses the notion of measurement with regard to teacher leadership and the subsequent use of a Rasch model of measurement. A new Early Childhood Teacher Leadership scale is proposed and the emergent questionnaire

outlined. Finally, the pilot test for the teacher leadership scale and questionnaire is described, including findings that provided directions for improvements to the questionnaire.

Chapter five is a description of the method of the study and begins with a brief review of methods used in similar studies, followed by a discussion to support the design of the present study. The sample and population is described and the procedure for data collection in Phases One and Two is outlined.

Chapters six to eleven present the data analysis and findings from Phase One of the study (the questionnaire). Chapter six is based on Section A of the questionnaire and contains a summary of the biographical details, providing background to and a description of the sample population.

Chapter seven is based on Section B of the questionnaire, the Early Childhood Teacher Leadership Model and presents the psychometric analysis of the model. The process of analysis using the RUMM (2010) computer program is outlined and the results presented. Meaning of the resultant Teacher Leadership scale is explained and the implications discussed.

Chapters eight to eleven are based on Section C of the questionnaire comprised of open-ended questions that sought further information on respondent's views on leadership in early childhood education. Chapter eight (Part A of Section C) investigates factors that teachers reported helped them to explain their early childhood philosophy to the principal, children's parents and other teachers in the school.

Chapter nine (Part B of Section C) examines the factors that teachers reported hindered their explanations of early childhood philosophy to the principal, children's parents and other teachers in the school.

Chapter ten (Part C of Section C) examines the strategies that teachers reportedly used to help them to communicate their philosophy to the principal, children's parents and other teachers in the school.

Chapter eleven (Part C of Section C) presents and discusses additional comments made by respondents about leadership in early childhood education.

## **Phase Two**

Phase two of the study involves the follow-up interviews. The findings are reported in four chapters (chapters 12-15). Chapter twelve deals with Part A of the interview findings and investigates how Western Australian early childhood teachers conceptualise their role with regard to leadership.

Chapter thirteen, Part B of the interview findings identifies factors that early childhood teachers report enhance or constrain their leadership abilities.

Chapter fourteen, Part C of the interview findings examines the strategies that early childhood teachers report they use to explain their pedagogy and philosophy to others.

Chapter fifteen presents a discussion of the findings from the interviews reported in chapters thirteen and fourteen.

Chapter sixteen, the final chapter, provides a summary of the study and draws together the major findings, conclusions and implications of the study for administrators, early childhood teachers, teacher educators, and for further research.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Introduction**

Research has identified numerous factors that influence teachers' abilities, across year levels, to enact their pedagogy. The factors identified can also influence teachers' abilities to communicate their philosophy and pedagogy. Limited studies have been conducted in the area of teacher leadership with regard to articulating and communicating early childhood philosophy. Consequently, in this chapter a review of related literature has encompassed year levels other than early childhood. Nine factors or sources that may influence teachers' abilities to exercise leadership skills have been synthesised from a broad spectrum of educational settings, across varied student ages and different countries. These are (1) Institutional control; (2) School culture; (3) System level influences; (4) Career path of teachers; (5) Teacher voice; (6) Staff relationships; (7) Community influences; (8) Interpersonal skills; and (9) Intrapersonal skills. The evidence for these is explained in the material to follow.

It is not purported that these factors are the only sources that influence teacher leadership abilities, but rather, these were the factors that commonly emerged from a wide literature search. Each of these factors may influence, to some degree, early childhood teachers' abilities to articulate and communicate their pedagogy and philosophy. A further limitation should be noted whereby much of the literature in the field of teacher leadership is based on qualitative research methods and, therefore, the findings are criticised by some as lacking measurement and causal support. In addition, some studies could be criticised for the small sample size and the lack of detail provided about the methodology and the process of interpreting data. Despite the fact that some research is based on as few as one or two case studies of single teachers, supporters of qualitative research would argue that it is these studies that provide 'richer' data and more insight and understanding into a problem or situation (Creswell, 1994; Punch, 1998).

## **Institutional control**

Zeichner, Tabachnick & Densmore (1987) outlined a model that identified three forms of control or constraints that can be exerted on classroom teachers, ultimately influencing their ability to enact their pedagogy:

1. Direct control where the principal or other super-ordinate closely monitors teachers' actions;
2. Bureaucratic control from rules, policies and social hierarchies; and
3. Technical control such as curriculum, teaching resources, building designs and timetables.

In the first form, direct control, principals had clear expectations of what and how teachers should teach, but it was found that they rarely attempted to monitor whether teachers complied with school norms. Lack of monitoring may be interpreted as lack of interest which may, in turn, influence the pedagogy of teachers. Others, however, have suggested principals may exert considerable influence on the program that teachers implement (Fullan, 1996; Greenberg, 1995). For example, anecdotal evidence indicates some principals have required teachers to restructure their program to include more formal teacher-directed tasks and to reduce blocks of child-initiated activity. Fullan (1996) warned against situations where the principal manipulates teachers to conform to personal visions. It is suggested that, in these situations, teachers do not articulate their voice. Fullan pointed out that teachers might have visions that are equally valid, if not more valid, than the principal's vision. The same may be said for early childhood pedagogical knowledge where the teacher may have more valid knowledge than the principal. In the same vein, Crowther and Kearney (1998) in an analysis of Queensland's Standards Framework, questioned whether there is an implication that administrators' knowledge is "superordinate to teachers' knowledge" (p. 11).

In a study on the effect of education on child care teachers' beliefs and classroom quality, Cassidy, Buell, Pugh-Hoese and Russel (1995) concluded that the support of colleagues and administrators was a strong determinant of the likelihood of putting knowledge into practice. Teachers who lack support may find it difficult to transfer acquired or increased knowledge of developmentally appropriate practice to classroom practice. Based on similar findings, Greenberg (1995) and French and

Pena (1997) concluded that in order to promote excellence in early childhood education, principals must provide active leadership and support for the early childhood program in their school. From another angle, Berlak & Berlak (1981, p. 247) suggested that most administrators share the same goal - to "directly or indirectly...influence the way teachers conduct schooling...or resolve the dilemmas". On the other hand, Weber (1989) suggested principals have a more 'indirect' influence on what happens in teachers' classrooms. In another study, Blase, (1988) concluded teachers develop a political self, based on reactive or proactive responses, and behaved differently with principals they viewed as either participatory or authoritarian. Teachers tended to be more closed with authoritarian than democratic principals and, as control over teachers tightened, they became less motivated and committed, which reduced their overall involvement in their work. However, this study did not consider the effect of a laissez-faire principal. It could be argued that given the opposite extreme of teachers left to their own devices with a laissez-faire principal, there is also the possibility of little motivation and commitment from teachers.

Embedded within the form of technical control and with the call from the literature for increased participatory educational leadership arising from the principal, there lies a contradiction. It has been suggested that teachers do not seek educational leadership from principals in terms of the nature of learning or classroom teaching, organisation and management. Indeed Sarason (1995, p. 75) suggested teachers "tend to shy away from meaningful discussions of these matters with the principal". Sarason (1995) went further to state that principals feel uncomfortable in this role and would rather that teachers solved their own problems. Thus, while the need for more support from the principal for the early childhood program is highlighted, it seems that pervading attitudes of both teachers and principals are likely to be a barrier to this occurring.

The second form of control (bureaucratic) outlined by Zeichner et al. (1987) included school policies and procedures that attempted to guide and control teachers' behaviour. The study revealed that teachers complied with these policies and procedures to varying degrees. Kuzmic (1994) highlighted the need for teachers to develop as reflective practitioners so they may acquire the skills to resist conformity, or challenge what they view as inappropriate bureaucratic pressures. An essential

foundation for this process is to understand the organisational life of schools in order to develop political tactics and teaching strategies necessary to deal with difficulties.

Teachers find idiosyncratic ways to interpret or adhere to school policy. For example, an early childhood teacher may believe that there is no need for, or benefit in, implementing a procedural discipline policy adopted by the school, or for reporting a child's progress to parents in a school-wide format. A study of three early childhood teachers whom Ayers (1992) referred to as *resistant teachers*, revealed each found independent ways of resisting pressures that did not match their values, such as teaching to tests and grading. The ability of a teacher to avoid adopting a school procedure, or to use it in a modified form, depends largely on the use of adept political skills and the context or culture of the school. Silva, Gimbert and Nolan (2000) use the term learning to 'navigate the structure of the schools'. This process involved teacher leaders becoming aware of the culture and politics of the school and finding ways to communicate their ideas in accepted ways within the school. In support, Brookfield (1995, p. 221) suggested that as teachers develop, they acquire "a stock of tactical knowledge about teaching against the grain in institutions hostile to their values".

Zeichner, et al. (1987) identified technical control, the third form, as the strongest influence on the actions of teachers. Elements such as school curriculum, teaching resources, building designs and timetables were seen as pervading every teacher's classroom. One example of technical influence in an early childhood context has been highlighted recently in Western Australia. Ewing (1997) and Corrie (1999) reported the decline in space allocation for early childhood buildings as being a significant constraint on the practices of teachers. In a study by Wien (1996), time pressures were identified as having a dominant impact on teachers' abilities to construct developmentally appropriate practice. It was suggested that the paucity of time for teachers to plan, prepare, enact and reflect, led to a reduction in program content and quality. It could also be said that, if a teacher had a high degree of commitment and motivation, or a supportive working environment in the face of time constraints, then the impact on the quality or content of the program might be reduced. In other words, a combination of factors or influences, rather than a lack of time alone may lead to a reduction in quality of the program. Indeed, Duke (1994) touched on the issue of teacher motivation and its effects on the quality of teaching in

one of six propositions for leadership in relation to teacher commitment and meaningful activity. He posited that one element necessary for teacher commitment was *focus* which involved having "...a clear sense of how to concentrate scarce time and energy in order to move in a desired direction" (Duke, 1997, p. 271).

The three forms of control over teachers' actions identified by Zeichner, et al. (1987) can be viewed as elements of the culture of an educational setting or school. The culture of a school has been defined simply as "the way things are done around here" (Deal, 1987, p. 5) or, applied to organisations more generally, culture has been defined as:

A pattern of basic assumptions – invented, discovered or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration – that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems (Schein, 1985, p. 9).

Similarly, and with specific reference to *school* culture, Stolp (1991) suggested that it is the system of meaning which shapes the thoughts and actions of members within a school. In Stolp's definition of school culture, the patterns of meaning are formed in the school's history and include "the norms, values, beliefs, ceremonies, rituals traditions, and myths understood, maybe in varying degrees, by members of the school community" (Stolp, 1991, p. 2).

### **School culture**

As an all-enveloping influence, the culture of an educational setting can exert very strong pressures on the way teachers enact their pedagogy (Beare, Caldwell & Millikan, 1989; Hargreaves, 1994; Saphier & King, 1985; Sergiovanni, 1990). Hawkey (1996) proposed that teachers with strong self-images as educators could be undermined by the context in which they work. Where there is conflict between a teacher's view of pedagogy and the culture of an organisation, many beginning teachers make "a conscious decision to adapt to the existing culture since this will bring greatest success, until such time that they can resist or change that culture" (Hawkey, 1996, p. 101). However, it was noted that this adaptation to circumstances could become internalised with teachers not returning to practice that reflected their initial or fundamental view of teaching.



In the same vein, Bullough (1987) suggested the culture of a school can:

...press the teacher to set aside conflicting personal values... if we but listen to the voices of teachers, what we can hear are the uneasy compromise and of unfulfilled lingering dreams, dreams of the kind of teacher they want to be (p. 86).

In support, Corrie (1996) found that in situations where teachers' views of pedagogy conflicted with those of the head teacher, they either adapted to the conflicting views or left the school. In relation to early childhood pedagogy, Daniel (1994, p. 64) summarised the view of several early childhood practitioners to highlight the "vulnerability of new teachers to a range of inappropriate practices and expectations, many of which reflect society's general misunderstanding regarding the needs of children".

Within some schools, there is evidence of what Hargreaves (1994) referred to as a 'balkanized' culture. 'Balkanization' is where teachers are separated into "insulated and often competing sub-groups within a school" (p. 213). Membership of a particular subgroup may increase the degree to which teachers are hindered in their ability to articulate and communicate their philosophy. Hargreaves pointed out:

Promotion, status and resources are frequently distributed between and realized through membership of teacher sub-cultures. These goods are not distributed evenly, nor are they contested by different sub-cultures on equal terms. Teachers of older students tend to receive more status and rewards than teachers of younger ones ...In balkanized cultures, there are winners and losers (p. 215).

It may be concluded that early childhood staff are likely to constitute one of these sub-groups within a primary school setting and, in particular, the subgroup is likely to be one of low status (Gifford, 1993; Halliwell, 1990a).

### **System level influences**

Influences are exerted on teachers from outside the classroom milieu, emanating from what is often referred to as the system or macro level. Halliwell (1992) identified the source of some of these influences, noting that each group of stakeholders held competing perceptions about the best approach for care and education in early childhood:

Interests of other stakeholders, policy makers, funding agencies, local communities and competing interest groups, impinge on [practitioners'] work with children in quite subtle ways, as part of the social structure of their work context (p. 130).

In support, Wood and Bennett (2000) noted that policy, curriculum directives and in-service courses could influence teachers to change or modify their professional knowledge. Smythe (1996) suggested that devolution in the form of self-managing schools serve to strengthen central control rather than empower schools and their communities as purported. From this perspective, Smythe labelled our schools as socially unjust and suggested that leaders of socially just schools would "take a strong stance against external agencies who hold impositional views" (p. 1127). This has implications for the field of early childhood education. Given that there is a lack of knowledge, support and understanding from some principals for appropriate practice in early childhood education (French & Pena, 1997; Stamopoulos, 1998), it is unlikely that these principals would be in a position to take an informed stand against pressures from external agencies that held views contrary to what is considered to be appropriate practice in early childhood education.

From a more global perspective, Vaughan and Cahir (1996) asserted that children's services are affected by such policies as industrial relations, economic reforms, family, status of women and social justice. More specifically, Halliwell (1992) highlighted factors such as societal trends, television and parent expectations as being sources of constraints for teachers implementing their curriculum.

In a study of two teachers of five and six year olds in a primary school setting in Australia, Halliwell (1992) investigated how teachers could implement a child-responsive curriculum in the face of influences which conflicted with their practical knowledge. Though aware the curriculum was a result of both their own actions and the influences of others, the teachers unintentionally blamed others for decisions they believed they were pressured to take. Such influences were referred to as dilemmas, and it was noted that while teachers may face common dilemmas, the way in which each dilemma was experienced and managed varied with each practitioner. Following this, Halliwell (1992) asserted that there was a need to know how experienced teachers maintain what they consider to be appropriate practice in the face of pressures in their work context. However, it could be argued that strategies employed by experienced teachers may not be able to be utilised by less experienced

teachers. Less experienced teachers too, may successfully employ their own strategies to resist pressures in their work place. It may be that the success of a particular strategy is linked also, to the level of confidence or personality type of the teacher, rather than the level of experience alone. For this reason, it may be more pertinent to investigate how early childhood teachers with varying experience perceive and overcome constraints or barriers to appropriate practice in their work context.

### **The career path of teachers**

The stage at which early childhood practitioners are in their development or career path has been identified as an influential factor in the exercising of leadership skills. Vander Ven (1988) outlined a five-stage development model for early childhood educators: (1) Novice; (2) Initial; (3) Informed; (4) Complex; and (5) Influential. According to the level of professionalism and roles and functions outlined in each stage, it can be inferred that early childhood practitioners, from at least stage three (informed), have the knowledge base and opportunities to articulate and enact their pedagogy. As Vander Ven (1988) suggested, early childhood practitioners in the informed stage:

...feel more sure of their abilities ...[and] are also able to transform passivity into a more confident stance in which there is more ability to act to modify these external variables that do not positively support their work (p. 148).

In a later model, Vander Ven (1991) outlined three stages for early childhood practitioners' development: (1) Direct care, novice; (2) Direct care, advanced and; (3) Indirect care. These models can also be related to the 4 stages proposed by Katz (1977): (1) Survival; (2) Consolidation; (3) Renewal; and (4) Maturity. It is interesting to note that further research by Katz (1995a) revealed experienced teachers could regress to the survival stage with changes in context or influences. In the Katz (1977) and latter Vander Ven (1991) model, it would be most likely that teachers demonstrate leadership skills from stage three (renewal), or stage two (direct care) (Rodd, 1994). However, it should also be recognised that some beginning practitioners may exhibit well-developed leadership skills.

Demonstration of leadership at the renewal or direct-care stage would incorporate a broader range of leadership skills than is the focus for the present study. It is argued that opportunities for exercising leadership skills including articulation and communication of early childhood pedagogy, would arise from the beginning stages of the Katz and Vander Ven models. However, it seems the degree to which teachers harness each opportunity varies from teacher to teacher. If more practitioners grasp each opportunity, it may aid the perception of early childhood education as a profession and gain "much needed advances in community credibility and status" (Rodd, 1994, p. 1).

From another perspective, Jorde Bloom (1999) suggested that directors of child care in their role as 'middle managers' progress through four stages of (1) Blind compliance, (2) Uncomfortable compliance, (3) Working the system, and (4) Redefining the system. The first stage, blind compliance, is when the director complies with the will of an authority without question. The second stage, uncomfortable compliance, is when a director complies with an authority out of intimidation or fear of consequences, but privately questions the actions. The third stage, working the system, involves working within organisational constraints to achieve desired outcomes. The fourth stage, redefining the system, is when the director is able to educate or influence an authority through being "adept at advocating for needed changes to make their programs more efficient and effective" (Jorde Bloom, 1999, p. 93).

Whilst these stages suggested by Jorde Bloom (1999) arose from research with directors of child care settings, parallels can be drawn with the work of early childhood teachers within a school setting. These teachers too may be viewed as 'middle managers', as they direct their teacher assistants and other adults working with the children in their care, and also answer to the principal as the authority within the school. However, from this perspective, one would expect that teachers would only be able to demonstrate leadership from the third and fourth stages of working the system and redefining the system. This is contrary to the assumption on which the third wave of teacher leadership is based, that every teacher is expected to exercise leadership through being an advocate, ensuring that the children in their care are immersed in an appropriate teaching and learning environment. Nevertheless, the influence of contexts, personal experience and confidence on teachers' leadership

abilities cannot be dismissed. Whilst some beginning teachers may indeed progress through the four stages suggested by Jorde Bloom (1999), others may begin their teaching career operating at stage three or four. Others still, may not progress beyond stage two of uncomfortable compliance or “remain fixed at a less than competent level” (Berliner, 1994, p. 6021) for the duration of their teaching career. It is this situation which leads to the question of what factors help or hinder teachers to progress beyond uncomfortable compliance to enact leadership in communicating their philosophy and redefining the system?

### **Teacher voice**

Research mentioned previously, has consistently identified the need for early childhood teachers to articulate and communicate their voice, in order to be proactive advocates for young children and the early childhood profession. Ball (1987) described *voice* as being:

...either the articulation of individual views and grievances or a collective statement. ...collective responses in an organizational setting depend to a large degree on the awareness among a group of actors ‘of the commonality of their goals and the commonality of their fate’...that is, the establishment of an interest group (p. 63).

Closely related to voice is the notion of activism which Sachs (1998) described as:

...responding publicly with issues that relate directly or indirectly to education and schooling. It involves participation, collaboration and cooperation from within and outside the profession (p. 9) ...It requires risk taking and fighting for ideals that will enhance education (p. 10).

It is the collective voice that is generally viewed as the most powerful or influential and indeed, regarded as the ‘safer’ form of activism by Sachs (1998). However, Sachs emphasised that individual activism was also important, stating teachers should be active and proactive both individually and collectively. Rodd (1997a, p. 4) outlined three areas based on those termed by Meade as *webs of influence* in which teachers can become active: 1) the political web where policies can be influenced; 2) the professional web where values and professionalisation can be influenced; and 3) the web of scholars where practice can be informed and guided at the grass roots level.

It is important to note that, in each of these webs, the skills of effective articulation and communication of early childhood philosophy and pedagogy are essential. In order to be influential in each web, early childhood practitioners must perceive themselves empowered to direct their own life, so they can be proactive rather than reactive (Rodd, 1997a).

Fullan and Hargreaves (1992) highlighted the importance of individuals taking responsibility for what they believe in, quoting Barth (1990, p. 131) at length:

To assert one's leadership as a teacher, often against forces of administrative resistance, takes commitment to an educational ideal. It also requires the energy to combat one's own inertia caused by habit and overwork. And it requires a certain kind of courage to step outside of the small prescribed circle of traditional 'teacher tasks', to declare through our actions that we care about and take responsibility for more than the minimum, more than what goes on within the four walls of our classrooms.

It is acknowledged, however, that many researchers have warned repeatedly that educational reforms do not support cultures in which teachers are encouraged to engage in collaborative activity and open communication (Ball, 1997; Hargreaves, 1994; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992). Further, Anderson (1996) highlighted the existence of 'institutional silencing' whereby "voices tend to be silenced in order to protect the powerful" (p. 958). In support, Smythe (1996) argued for the need for our self-managing schools to be based more on educational, social and democratic ideals rather than the present economical considerations. Smythe (1996) proposed several criteria for socially just self-managing schools. Among them were:

- Who is allowed to speak – only those in positions of power and status?;
- Whether decisions are arrived at on the basis of genuine consensus;
- Whether some viewpoints are privileged, while others are denied, ignored or silenced;
- Whether participation and collaboration is genuine, or forced and contrived; and
- Whether deliberate moves are made to search out the view of minority groups and where their voices are being heard (p. 1124).

These criteria can be applied equally to all persons within the interlocking contexts of a school, that is, the teachers, students, parents and the community. However, in the context of the present study, it is the status of early childhood staff within a school in relation to these criteria that is the focus. Smythe (1996, p. 1118) concluded that:

We need to listen to one another's voices as teachers more and publicly defend them against the ones who unthinkingly follow the model of industry.

### **Staff relationships**

Another important factor that influences teachers' abilities to exercise leadership skills is the relationship between adults in early childhood programs. Whether the relationship is between a director and child care workers, preprimary teacher and assistant, or preprimary teacher and primary school principal, the quality of the relationship can have considerable influence on the degree to which desired pedagogy is enacted or communicated. For example, role clarity has been identified as a key element of professional and collaborative relationships (Lieber, Beckman, Hanson, Janko, Marquart, Horn & Odom, 1997; Smylie & Denny, 1990). Conflict arising through lack of role clarity can contribute to teachers feeling disempowered or believing they lacked leadership skills (Best, 1996; Gold & Roth, 1993; Jorde Bloom, 1999; Wasley, 1991). Stamopoulos (1998) found that preprimary teachers and principals in Western Australia held differing perceptions of role responsibilities, sometimes leading to difficulties in relationships. It is likely that differing perceptions may affect the working relationship between the principal and teacher, ultimately influencing the ability of teachers to articulate and enact their early childhood pedagogy. Indeed, some principals may have a vested interest in keeping early childhood teachers disempowered. For example, a teacher who articulates and communicates early childhood pedagogy in an assertive manner may be viewed as a threat to the leadership roles of some principals (Troen & Boles, 1994; Yarger & Lee, 1994).

Relationships among staff in educational settings have received little attention within the vast amount of educational research conducted over the decades (Sarason, 1991). In Sarason's view, human relationships are one of the most "revealing

features of the school culture” and the lack of research into these relationships is “symptomatic of the need either to deny reality or to hide it from outsiders” (Sarason, 1991, p. 75). Sarason also outlined factors that affected relationships among staff within a school, including age, years of teaching, marital status, perceived competence, sex, year level being taught and psychological and educational orientation. Sarason (1991, p. 75) proposed that there is a tendency for outsiders to view teachers within a school as a “cohesive and interactive group” but suggested the reality to be otherwise. Early childhood practitioners teach the youngest year level and have a different educational orientation to most other staff, and this is likely to affect the interactions or relationships with other staff within the school.

The role of individuals within early childhood settings is tied closely to who has perceived control. Administrators may perceive organizational climate more favourably than their staff who perceived low levels of control in their roles (Jorde Bloom, 1988). Similarly, Halliwell (1990b) suggested that teachers who perceived others as having greater authority might feel limited in their actions within the setting of the school. In the same vein, Dinham (1992) suggested some beginning teachers were reluctant to seek assistance from their supervisors who ultimately assessed their performance, in case it was viewed as an inability to cope. Coladarci and Breton (1997), too, found that teachers in a positive supervisory relationship reported a higher sense of efficacy than those in a less positive supervisory relationship, and Blackmore (1996) noted that we need to recognise that “we are all complicit in particular forms of domination and relationships which produce inequality” (p. 1033).

Another influence on interactions between staff is the varying perceptions of individuals in relation to gender. Gender has been posited as an important contextual or cultural element when examining the phenomenon of leadership (Cox, 1996; Klenke, 1996). Valli (1990, p. 46), asserted that many of the dominant assumptions held by individuals in our society “maintain an unjust and repressive social order”. With regard to gender issues, some have suggested that the male perspective is still dominant in our society and that many educational institutions do not question gender-biased assumptions that may be inherent in each institution (Anning, 1998; Bransgrove, 1993; Cox, 1996). Anning (1998) took this view further and suggested that there is a gender divide between two of the major stakeholders in early



childhood education, that is, the practitioners and the policy makers. In Anning's view, practitioners are "mostly women, mostly educated in the state system" and value the notion of nurturing children and learning through play. In contrast, policy makers are perceived to be "mostly men, mostly educated in private schools, and regard play as a frivolous activity" (Anning, 1998, p. 302). Gender imbalance is evident in the staff of many schools where the majority of teachers are female, and in administrative positions where females are underrepresented at the high levels in authority and pay.

Likewise, in Western Australia, the majority of early childhood teachers are female, and it is most likely that the principal of the school will be male. Stereotyped perceptions of gender, held by either the teacher or the principal, may influence interactions between them. A decade ago, Ball (1987) asserted that women experienced discrimination in the "construction of their careers and articulation of their views" (p. 72). Further, Ball pointed out that if women communicated their views in an assertive manner, they may create hostility and even confirm prejudices held by some men. In support, Cox (1996) posited that rather than being looked upon favourably (as would a man) for demonstrating leadership skills such as speaking out, women are subjected to criticism in terms of being unfeminine or difficult. Such attitudes are perpetuated across society and, in Waniganayake's (1998, p. 96) view, are a "major stumbling block in the development of leadership" in the field of early childhood education.

Whilst some may claim our society has progressed beyond blatant discrimination against women, it is suggested by many that biased views of gender roles and power relationships are still evident in society and educational institutions today (Ben-Peretz, 1996; Blackmore, 1996; Cox, 1996; Summers, 1997). Indeed, Helsby and McCulloch (1996) called for examination of the role of gender as a facet of teacher culture to shed more light on 'teacher professionalism' and 'professional control' (p. 72). Schmuck (1996) went further to state:

If educational reform is to occur, researchers, theoreticians and practitioners must recognize that gender must be considered as a relevant variable in the lives of girls and boys, and women and men in schools (p. 348).

Similarly, Ben-Peretz (1996, p. 185) suggested that “interpersonal relations are at the centre of teachers’ professional lives” and that accounts of “power relationships between themselves and their mainly male supervisors” will provide opportunities for other teachers to examine issues of gender and power from a more critical perspective. Riehl and Lee (1996) suggested that women are empowered when they work in schools that address gender issues or have female leaders. However, one would assume that the personalities and perceptions of the women and other staff within the setting would also have some influence on the degree of empowerment realised. Reflecting a broader view of relationships, Elicker (1997) highlighted the need for more research on the importance of relationship qualities and processes in early childhood settings in order to inform educators wishing to communicate and develop relationship strategies.

### **Community influences on pedagogy**

Another source of influence on teachers’ pedagogy from outside the classroom milieu is families of the children. Teachers may face pressure in the form of communicated expectations from children’s parents. Indeed, in one study, 60 elementary school teachers cited children’s parents as a source of pressure, emphasising academic curriculum (Stipek & Byler, 1997). Another study found principals believed parent expectations to be the second most important influence on the implementation of a developmentally appropriate program (French & Pena, 1997). For example, some parents may believe a major role of early childhood educators is to provide opportunities for children to develop school readiness skills or to concentrate on more academic curriculum. However, these expectations are contrary to what is considered to be developmentally appropriate practice for young children. The difference between expectations of some parents and those of early childhood practitioners highlights the need for early childhood teachers to possess the ability to communicate their philosophy and pedagogy to children’s parents.

Hargreaves (1997) emphasised that teachers’ leadership roles include effective communication with parents. Hargreaves noted that many teachers are poorly prepared for such leadership roles and are “often uncomfortable about assuming wider responsibilities with parents and community groups” (p. 102). In the same vein, Davies` and Pollnitz (1994) suggested skills that support the development

of relationships within school settings (for example, communication skills, becoming more articulate and assertive), while an essential element of teachers' roles, are not easily learned from texts and lectures at the undergraduate level. It seems that skills, which support the development of effective relationships within a school community, are more likely to develop when integrated with real situations and experience. This means that in some instances, teachers may face pressure from sources within the school community before and while they are developing the necessary skills. In effect, influences from the school community may constrain teachers' abilities to communicate their pedagogy and philosophy.

With regard to outside influences on teachers' work lives, Ruohotie (1996, p. 128) referred to 'triggering mechanisms' or factors that can influence a person to change their work in some way, or to seek further knowledge or professional development. These mechanisms were grouped into three categories: (1) organization /society e.g. change in technology, cultural events; (2) work role e.g. role models, relationships; and (3) individual e.g. personal life changes, dissatisfaction with status quo.

Any such factors from outside a teacher's work place may trigger some change in their professional life. However, it must be recognised that such triggers may also result in changes that have a negative impact on teachers' professional lives. For example, preprimary teachers may experience some form of 'individual' trigger whereby they no longer feel able to accept the status quo of their status within the primary school. As a consequence of becoming more vocal and assertive with school issues that impact on the preprimary area, early childhood teachers may find their actions put the principal or other staff offside, with their more vocal presence viewed as a threat, or an unwelcome force in school decision-making.

### **Interpersonal skills**

Effective interpersonal skills are vital in educational settings but it has been noted that these skills are ones which many teachers lack or find the most difficult to exercise (Barth, 2001; Rodd, 1997b). Over a decade ago, Rodd (1987) highlighted the need for interpersonal skills training to be included at the undergraduate level in early childhood education. In an evaluation of an interpersonal skills course, Rodd

found students reported an increase in self confidence, understanding self and others, assertiveness and communication skills.

More recently, concern has been voiced in the child care field with regard to a perceived lack of leadership skills demonstrated by centre directors. In response, Bloom and Sheerer (1992) conducted a 16 month early childhood leadership program that included such components as leadership style, parent and community relations, and public policy and advocacy. Many participants in the program reported increased assertiveness, motivation to become involved in early childhood issues, and a "willingness to advocate for young children and the profession" (p. 586). It is recognised that the director or coordinator can influence the work environment and quality of the program through setting standards and expectations. The same may be said of the early childhood practitioner influencing the program and work milieu in their centre or classroom. Thus it is essential for practitioners to acquire the leadership skills necessary to articulate and communicate these expectations to parents, other staff, and the wider community.

Although it may be argued that some early childhood teachers within a school setting may lack such leadership skills and, although it has been shown that training can increase leadership skills (Bloom & Sheerer, 1992), teachers must first have a desire to develop further skills in these areas. An extensive review of the literature revealed no research to date that has investigated early childhood teachers' perceptions of their leadership roles in terms of their actual and ideal views of leadership. That is, whether early childhood practitioners desire to have improved leadership skills. Perceptions of leadership have been identified as a crucial influence as to whether people emerge as leaders (Duke, 1994; Kolb, 1999).

Literature discussed previously has highlighted the importance of communicating early childhood pedagogy. However, Good and Brophy (1991) stated that before teachers can articulate and communicate their pedagogy, they must first develop an effective classroom. "Only then can the teacher help other teachers understand what they are doing in their classrooms" (p. 547). Further, however, it is argued by some that as part of developing an effective classroom, teachers must develop skills in critically reflective practice (Brookfield, 1995). In a study within child care settings (Cassidy & Lawrence, 2000) teachers were found to have either done little reflection or lacked the ability to articulate any reflection when asked to

communicate or explain their teaching practices. Critical reflective practice has been a descriptor identified consistently across standards frameworks for teachers. Through critical reflective practice, teachers are able to explain and justify their beliefs and actions to themselves and others. Brookfield described the critically reflective teacher as:

...much better placed to communicate to colleagues and students – as well as to herself – the rationale behind her practice. She works from a position of informed commitment. She knows why she does what she does, why she thinks what she thinks....This sense of groundedness stabilizes her when she feels swept along by forces she cannot control (p. 23).

From a similar perspective, Allen (1992) described the benefits of critical reflection:

Although the teacher may be in a physically constraining context where they are limited, they can access all levels of cognitive interest and explore their limitations. It may well be that this will overcome a lot of self-imposed limitations and release teachers to explore avenues which they had not previously considered as an option. It may also encourage teachers to view communication with others as a necessary and vital part of teachers' work (p. 272).

Brookfield (1995), too, emphasised that critical reflection is a social process and best learned through conversations with colleagues. However, it is recognised that the culture of schools can be the source of barriers to critical reflective practice. Brookfield identified three cultural barriers to critical reflection as silence, individualism and secrecy. Similarly, Fullan and Hargreaves (1992) identified privacy, individualism and isolation as persistent in school cultures. Overarching the cultures of schools is educational reform based on 'market forces' (Ball, 1997). The resultant 'corporate-like' cultures is where, Ball (1997, p. 261) stated:

Professionalism is replaced by accountability, collegiality by competition and interpersonal performative comparison. These are forms of power which are realised and reproduced through social interaction within the everyday life of institutions.

In the same vein, the culture of a school can also be the source of barriers to collaboration or collegiality. Sergiovanni (1990, p. 117) defined collegiality as:

The existence of high levels of collaboration among teachers and is characterized by mutual respect, shared work values, cooperation, and specific conversations about teaching and learning.

Firestone (1996) suggested that collegial interaction helped teachers with support and commitment to their work but also noted that the structure of schools did not allow strong collegial interactions to develop. In addition, Firestone suggested that collegial interactions were more likely to occur at high school level and least likely to occur in elementary grades. Among the standards frameworks for teachers, collaboration and collegiality are consistent expectations. However, it appears that collaboration and collegiality will be realised more readily in some schools than others. In some schools, early childhood teachers do not share equal status with their primary colleagues and their opinions are not valued in conversations about teaching and learning. In these situations, it would be difficult for the early childhood teachers to become a part of meaningful collegial interactions. In some schools, the culture of collaboration or collegiality may be contrived (Hargreaves, 1994) which would have similar implications for early childhood teachers who may endeavour to articulate and communicate their pedagogy.

### **Intrapersonal factors**

It has been suggested that self-confidence or esteem is the most crucial foundation for effective leadership (Cherniss, 1998). Self-confidence is based on self-knowledge which includes a “realistic assessment of [one’s] strengths and weaknesses” (Cherniss, 1998, p. 27). It follows that in order to enact leadership roles, early childhood practitioners must be able to reflect on and attain an accurate perception of their personal strengths and weaknesses that may influence their abilities to perform these roles. Self-efficacy which is the result of achieving what one has set out to achieve can be viewed as a component of self-esteem (Barry & King, 1988) and it is suggested that teachers need a feeling of efficacy to be motivated to strive for further success.

A sense of efficacy has also been linked to the willingness of teachers to take on extra-role behaviours (Somech & Drach-Zahavy, 2000). Extra-role behaviours are those that go beyond formal duties or job description and as such, failure to engage in these does not result in any formal penalty. It may be considered that

enacting leadership in the form of articulating and communicating early childhood philosophy to others is an extra-role behaviour. Hence, a teacher with a low sense of self-efficacy is less likely to engage in such extra-role behaviour. In addition, it may be inferred that failure to be a vocal advocate for young children and appropriate programs within a primary school setting would not attract penalties. Indeed the reverse may be true with teachers being rewarded for 'fitting in' with more primary oriented philosophies and the predominant culture of a school.

Lefrancois (1994) outlined two components of efficacy. The first component related to the "actual competencies... required for successful performance", while the second component was the "individual's personal estimates of competence" (p. 279). In line with the second component of efficacy, Cole and Chan (1994) suggested that teachers who believed they were in control and able to achieve at a high level were likely to be successful. Conversely, those teachers who did not believe they were capable of meeting high standards were "more likely to blame others for their low-level achievements (p. 20). It follows that early childhood practitioners, who believe that they have the ability to articulate and communicate their pedagogy and philosophy to others, will develop a feeling of efficacy. Similarly, it may be concluded that practitioners, who do not feel they are capable of articulating and communicating their pedagogy effectively to others, may tend to blame others for their lack of achievement.

The ability to direct oneself and engage in self-reflection and evaluation can be classed as intrapersonal influences on teachers' enactment of pedagogy. Duff, Brown and Scoy (1995) viewed these skills as fundamental to the professional development of teachers, and emphasised that individuals need to take greater responsibility for their own professional growth. Indeed, Huberman (1993) found that there was a "certain unconsciousness" among teachers and that many teachers did not have "the inclination to reflect on their own situation or their own professional future" (p. 262). It has been suggested that while schools are centres for student learning, the notion of teachers as continuous or lifelong learners is overlooked (Sarason, 1990; Ruohotie, 1996; Sachs, 1998). This view was echoed by Ingvarson (1998) who called for a standards-based professional development system that would ensure teachers "continually review their practices in the light of contemporary research and professional standards" (p. 11). Ruohotie (1996)

suggested that involvement in professional development could affect self-esteem as with each cycle of updating knowledge, the person experienced increased confidence in their ability. However, this effect relies on the assumption that the professional development teachers engage in is relevant to their individual needs.

The importance of ongoing professional development for teachers was also reinforced in a report of the Senate Employment, Education and Training Reference Committee, entitled *A Class Act* (1998), which investigated the status of teachers. The need for ongoing professional development for teachers was included in the recommendations. Hargreaves and Evans (1997, p. 12) echoed the importance of meeting the “long-term and continuing professional learning needs” of teachers. However, it was pointed out that professional development for teachers usually focuses on short term implementation of government priorities and that “it is always likely that teachers’ pursuit of professional improvement will be outflanked by Government’s need to exert political control” (Hargreaves & Evans, 1997, p. 12). Given the caution that the government is unlikely to meet teachers’ long term and continuing professional development needs, it is again highlighted, that teachers need to take more responsibility for their own professional growth.

A possible overarching factor in developing skills of self-reflection and professional growth is the personal commitment to become proactive (Goodman, 1987). Sachs (1998) described this commitment in terms of teachers seeing themselves as “active agents in their own professional worlds” (p. 7). It is concluded that it is important for early childhood educators to reflect on their practice and assume personal responsibility to acquire the skills necessary to articulate and communicate effectively, early childhood pedagogy and philosophy. Fullan and Hargreaves (1992, p. 89) described the process as the responsibility to “locate, develop and articulate our purpose and our [inner] voice”.

Stonehouse (1994, p. 118) stressed that early childhood practitioners must begin to use “strong, clear, dispassionate language” about children and their education. However, it may be argued that in order to advocate for something, one must be passionate about the cause. Sergiovanni (1992, p. 25) pointed out that if a person cares deeply about a system and “its purposes, structure, conduct, history, future security and underlying values and commitments”, they need to show passion. When passion is not enough to communicate the importance and meaning of



something, then passion develops into outrage which Sergiovanni termed *leadership by outrage* and viewed as adding value to the act of leadership.

The factors identified previously, may act as constraints on the ability of teachers to engage in self-direction or reflection. Teachers are empowered when they experience support from the educational setting (Stone, 1995). Sergiovanni (1992) asserted that teachers are 'enabled' when they are granted support to make decisions and develop and direct their professional growth. However, Ingvarson (1998) pointed out that past experience in Australia showed teachers are not likely to be given empowerment. Rather, Ingvarson suggested teachers need to take or develop empowerment themselves through such activities as professional development. This notion of self-leadership has been defined by Neck and Manz (1992, p. 682) as "the process of influencing oneself to establish the self-direction and self motivation needed to perform".

The mind-set of an individual (tending to either optimism or pessimism) and associated thought patterns have been identified as influential in decision-making and meeting everyday challenges. An optimistic person will generally focus on constructive ways to face challenges whereas a person with pessimistic tendencies will generally focus on reasons to give up on or avoid challenges. Similarly, Allen (1992) suggested positive feelings and attitudes supported the act of reflection while negative emotions could "distort perception, result in false interpretation and discourage persistence" (p. 269). Seligman, (1991) cautioned against the attitude of 'blind optimism' promoting instead, a more 'flexible optimism'. As Seligman stated "we must be able to use pessimism's keen sense of reality when we need it, but without having to dwell in its dark shadows" (p. 292). Based on the premise that individuals can choose or manage the way they think, Neck and Barnard (1996, p. 25) suggested educators must learn to analyse and manage three elements of their mind: namely, internal dialogue (self talk), mental images (visualisation), and beliefs and assumptions.

Early childhood practitioners may doubt their own abilities to articulate and communicate early childhood pedagogy, or indeed, perceive obstacles in the way of their efforts. Reflecting on Neck and Barnard's (1996) three elements may help teachers to formulate and maintain constructive thought patterns. However, it is suggested that teachers would require help and guidance to adopt such constructive

thought patterns and it must be pointed out that in Australia, early childhood teachers are not likely to have access to professional development of this nature from within their work context. Thus if teachers had an interest in this area, they would need to take the initiative and seek their own professional development. Another point to consider is that some teachers with a pessimistic outlook, or a tendency towards negative thought patterns, may benefit largely from engaging in professional development to help them construct more positive thought patterns. However, these teachers are probably most unlikely to initiate their own professional development in this regard.

From another perspective, London (1995) suggested that how we view ourselves and others – which he termed *interpersonal insight* - is of key importance to interpersonal processes or relationships in organizations. London asserted that self and interpersonal insight can be fostered by self assessment, observation skills, feedback, reflection, and evaluation. Facilitating self-insight and interpersonal processes “can enhance individual and organizational development and effectiveness (p. 242). Although written from a business perspective, parallels can be drawn with interpersonal processes and relationships within educational settings. According to London, self-insight is the foundation of self-efficacy and interpersonal effectiveness. Following a similar line, and with specific reference to education, Makin (1996) asserted that:

Increased self and other awareness can...help educators to resist pressures towards accountability measures and outcomes which they think are inappropriate (p. 83).

In support, Cox (1996, p. 266) emphasised the importance of a “positive sense of self” and Cartwright (1999) highlighted the qualities of inner security and self-awareness as being essential to a ‘good’ early childhood teacher. However, if a teacher does not already possess these qualities, how can they acquire them within their work context? Further, do early childhood teachers have a desire to develop these and other skills for the purpose of leadership in the field of early childhood education?

## **Models of teacher leadership**

Models of teacher leadership have focussed typically on the roles or characteristics of teachers. These models are often not accompanied by supporting evidence and based on interviews and case studies with a limited sample, or data obtained from a questionnaire developed without an empirical base. For example, Freeman and Brown (2000) developed a model of program leadership for child care directors. Their model involved a self-administered checklist that was developed from a review of six sources from the literature. Directors were required to rate themselves against the list of leadership responsibilities in terms of their strengths and weaknesses to provide themselves with insights into their program management and leadership skills.

Troen and Boles (1994) proposed another example of a model that focussed on the roles of teacher leaders. They posited that their model departed from the traditional view of leadership through the nature of it being inclusive, collaborative and based on individual interests as opposed to the traditional view of the exclusive selection of leaders who often worked in isolation. In the inclusive model of teacher leadership, teachers assumed three key roles. The first role involved being a role model and mentor who facilitated the professional development of their colleagues. The second role required teachers to challenge the status quo of teaching in isolation, through teaching in collaboration, with regular discussions of practice and visits to one another's classrooms. The third role required teachers to exert their influence outside the classroom through involvement in committees and research.

This model of teacher leadership, though relevant in part to teacher leadership for the present study, does not provide specific aspects that are supported empirically, from which a scale of teacher leadership for early childhood practitioners can be developed. The Troen and Boles model (1994) emerged from a study of a learning and teaching collaborative in a professional development school in the U.S.A, and was based on interviews with eight elementary school teachers.

Taba, et al. (1999) proposed a broad model of leadership in early childhood education that called for child care directors to take action in five areas of leadership, namely advocacy leadership, administrative leadership, community leadership, conceptual leadership, and career development leadership. The model stemmed from a symposium that explored the direction leadership in early childhood education

needed to take in the twenty-first century. Despite being based on the observations, experience and knowledge of internationally recognised experts in early childhood education (see Kagan & Bowman, 1997), some may criticise the model for its lack of direct supporting evidence.

Rodd (1996) in a synthesis of research in Australia spanning three years, on child care coordinators' perceptions of leadership, developed a model or typology of an early childhood leader. This typology was comprised of a list of personal characteristics, professional skills, and roles and responsibilities of a child care coordinator. Although the model was based on a number of studies, Rodd (1996) acknowledged that it required further exploration and refinement.

From another perspective, Yarger and Lee (1994) proposed a beginning framework for a model of teacher leadership that comprised three clusters. The first cluster, *personal characteristics*, included expertise in subject and pedagogy, willingness to take risks, persistence and patience, an orientation towards working with adults and a commitment to continuing professional growth. The second cluster, *interpersonal skills*, included being an effective oral communicator and a good listener, mediator and negotiator while the third cluster, *institutional factors*, included administrative support, sufficient resources and leadership opportunities. Yarger and Lee (1994) developed their model in response to issues they believed were lacking in the literature. Specifically, they used their model to discuss how to identify potential effective teacher leaders (for example looking at personal characteristics); how to assist teachers to develop their leadership skills (for example emphasis on interpersonal skills in training programs); and how to support them in their leadership roles (for example providing administrative support).

Whilst many elements of this model are supported in the literature, it has been based, largely, on case studies of three elementary teachers who had completed an intense professional development program with a focus in mathematics or science. Despite the lack of empirical support, the model does make a significant contribution to teacher leadership in that it goes beyond characteristics and roles of teacher leaders and it highlights ways to help teachers develop their leadership potential and factors that can provide support to teachers in their leadership efforts. However, it is not clear whether the suggestions of ways to support teachers in their leadership efforts have come from the teachers themselves or from the researchers' own

perceptions and interpretations. The literature has highlighted the need for more research into teachers' voices (for example see Silva, Gimbert & Nolan, 2000; Smylie & Denny, 1990) and the present study aims to investigate Western Australian early childhood teachers' voices on their perceptions of their leadership roles.

As mentioned previously, many models of teacher leadership are based on qualitative research involving interviews and case studies with a limited sample. Critics of qualitative methodology demand that empirical evidence support the findings in studies. Many models are not accompanied by details of their research base, the data analysis procedures, or evidence of the reliability of the interpretations, thus providing cause for further criticism. The present study responds to such criticism with the aim of developing and testing a new model of early childhood teacher leadership with a modern measurement computer program.

In models of leadership, advocacy for young children is typically associated with action beyond the child care centre or school level, reaching into the wider community. However, the present study is more focussed on advocacy for young children within the school context. Such a focus responds to the call from Silva, Gimbert and Nolan (2000, p. 780) who suggested "virtually no research has been conducted [from the third wave perspective of teacher leadership] that makes leadership a part of the work a classroom teacher does on behalf of children". Their comment highlights the importance of, and how timely it is to, investigate early childhood teachers' perceptions of leadership, with a focus on advocating for young children from within the school context. Advocacy for young children and appropriate curriculum within the school context involves enactment of leadership through articulating and communicating early childhood philosophy and pedagogy to the principal, children's parents and other teachers in the school.

## **Summary**

Research has identified various factors that influence teachers' abilities, across year levels, to enact their pedagogy. Each of the factors identified may also influence early childhood teachers' abilities to enact leadership in the form of advocacy, in particular, through communicating their philosophy and pedagogy to others. These factors can be grouped under the broad headings of cultural and contextual level influences, and interpersonal and intrapersonal skill influences. The

cultural and contextual variables include Government policy and educational reforms, societal perceptions of young children and their education, and hence, parents' expectations of education for their children. Further variables emanate from the systems level where Education Department policies and directives, along with in-service provisions can influence teachers' leadership abilities. At a more direct level, the school culture can exert influence over teachers' leadership opportunities and abilities, with school policies, resources and the level of administrative support, all bearing some influence.

The interpersonal variables include teachers' own level of interpersonal skill development and the quality of relationships established with the principal, children's parents and other teachers in the school. The intrapersonal variables include teachers' professional confidence, self-understanding, career path, and their tendency to be proactive or reactive. Most of the research that identifies these variables has been conducted in the primary and secondary years of education, with limited studies carried out in early childhood settings. In particular, there is a dearth of research from Western Australian that investigates the factors that influence early childhood teachers' abilities to enact leadership in the form of advocacy, through articulating and communicating their pedagogy and philosophy to others.

Existing models of teacher leadership focus on various aspects ranging from specific characteristics, roles and responsibilities of leaders, to more categorical aspects such as advocacy, administrative, community, conceptual and career development leadership. To date, these models have largely lacked an empirical base of supporting evidence. In addition, models from the early childhood field have primarily been developed with a focus on leadership within the child care sector. Thus there is a need to develop a model of teacher leadership for early childhood practitioners working within the school setting, that can, in response to criticism, be tested and supported by empirical evidence.

It has been noted consistently over the years, that early childhood practitioners have struggled to articulate and communicate early childhood philosophy and pedagogy. Consistent urging has been made for practitioners to demonstrate leadership through articulating and communicating their pedagogy and philosophy to others. However, it appears little research to date has sought to determine why early childhood teachers as a group have experienced difficulty in

this area, or indeed how they perceive their leadership abilities, both actual and ideal. Hence, it is timely to establish how Western Australian early childhood practitioners perceive their role with regard to leadership in the school setting. It is also timely to investigate factors that Western Australian early childhood practitioners say facilitate or impede their abilities to articulate and communicate their early childhood pedagogy and philosophy.

The next chapter discusses the theoretical and conceptual framework of the study and proposes a new model of teacher leadership for early childhood educators working within a school context.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter reviews the major theoretical and philosophical assumptions that inform and underpin this study. The chapter begins with a discussion of critical theory and implications for the status of early childhood teachers within the primary school context is presented. Included in this section, is a discussion of personal assumptions held by the writer with regard to early childhood teachers' leadership roles. Following this is a related perspective of factors that influence early childhood teachers within their work context. Finally, a model of Early Childhood Teacher Leadership to be tested in this study is explained.

#### Critical theory

A global view which underpins this research is based on critical theory. According to Tripp (1992, p. 14), social critical theory views knowledge as “socially constructed and therefore artificial and held differently by different groups”. Critical theory is also concerned with “serving the interests of the traditionally marginalised, silenced and oppressed” (Smith, 1993, p. 76).

Carspecken and Apple (1992, p. 549) suggested a basic principle of critical research is to:

Think *relationally*. Think about the connections between what goes on in institutions such as schools and the assemblage of differential power relations – and how they are continuously reproduced, mediated, and /or transformed in our daily lives.

Mention has been made previously of the low status of women and early childhood in society, which has also been perpetuated in the education system. In addition to often being the minority grade level in terms of representation by number of staff, early childhood education is perceived as the least powerful. As Kincheloe & McLaren (1994) stated:



The oppression that characterizes contemporary societies is most forcefully reproduced when subordinates accept their social status as natural, necessary, or inevitable (p. 140).

From a critical theory perspective, teaching is viewed as political. “Teachers have a choice either to work in ways that legitimize and reinforce the status quo or in ways that liberate and transform the possibilities people see in their lives” (Brookfield, 1995, p. 209). A major assumption underpinning this research follows a similar line in that it is the responsibility of the early childhood educator to reflect on and endeavour to move beyond practice that maintains the status quo if it is contrary to what they know or believe to be appropriate early childhood philosophy and pedagogy.

A basic assumption held by the author of this thesis is that educators may possess knowledge of appropriate early childhood pedagogy as taught by training institutions but not enact such knowledge in their practice. In addition, early childhood educators may not have had the opportunity to develop skills necessary to articulate and communicate the knowledge effectively. It is acknowledged that contextual factors may place constraints or exert influence over enacting or articulating pedagogy, as may tacit beliefs or values. However, it is essential for early childhood educators to develop the skills to articulate and communicate their philosophy and pedagogy. Early childhood practitioners are bound, as are all in the education profession (Tanck, 1994), professionally and ethically, to follow professionally accepted practice. Katz (1995b) likened the practice of early childhood education to the professional practice of a physician:

What is required is to apply the accepted and available expertise, treatments, procedures, and knowledge agreed upon by the profession to be appropriate to each case (p. 29).

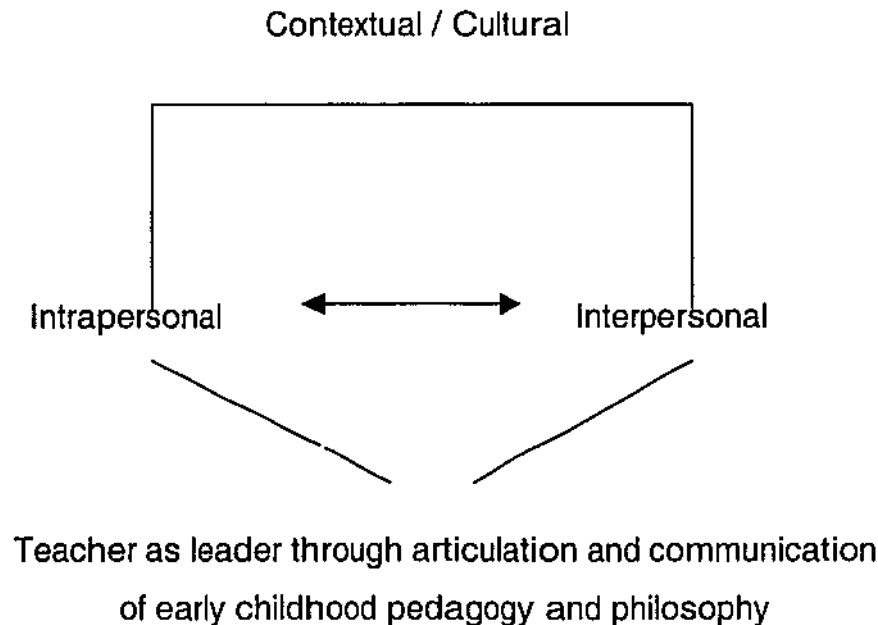
As a part of following accepted practice, it is believed that early childhood practitioners must communicate their knowledge to principals, parents and other school staff in order to advocate for young children.

It is acknowledged that cultural and historical influences have shaped the shared meaning of philosophy and pedagogy within the community of early childhood education. However, it is beyond the scope of this study to investigate the valuational underpinnings of early childhood philosophy or pedagogy as taught in training institutions or that perpetuated in the educational system or society. Indeed

others have sought to determine the nature of historical and cultural foundations of early childhood pedagogy (Spodek, 1988; Bowman, 1994; Cross, 1995; Cannella, 1997; Finkelstein, 1988).

**Teachers’ work context**

In a discussion of pedagogical context within a critical theory of education, Young (1989, p. 129) suggested teachers work in a “series of socially-separated, yet interlocking contexts”. Such contexts can be viewed from the broader public, political and institutional hierarchies down to the narrower context of the classroom in which a teacher works. Figure 1 attempts to conceptualise the influences from the interlocking contexts that may enhance or constrain teachers’ abilities to articulate and communicate their early childhood pedagogy, as identified in the literature. These influences form a part of the context in which teachers construct their pedagogical knowledge. Examining the interlocking contexts is important to understanding leadership in early childhood education. It has been suggested that future research on leadership in early childhood education must integrate the person and context by examining leadership potential from the perspective of within-an-individual and outside-an-individual (Rosemary, Roskos, Wendoff & Olson, 1998).



**Figure 1:** Influences that may enhance or constrain teachers’ abilities to articulate and communicate their pedagogy.

Source: constructed by the author based on the literature review.

Early childhood educators who demonstrate leadership are able to articulate their pedagogy and philosophy and communicate the underlying principles to parents, other professionals and the wider community which, in turn, enables them to advocate for young children.

### **Critical theory and intentions of this study**

According to Kincheloe & McLaren (1994)

...critical researchers often regard their work as a first step toward forms of political action that can redress the injustices found in the field site or constructed in the very act of research itself (p. 140).

Finding out how early childhood teachers, in a school setting, perceive their role with regard to leadership is viewed as a beginning step in understanding injustices or imbalance in the work context. Some researchers have argued that critical research should have 'emancipatory' intent. It has also been pointed out that intent alone does not lead to an emancipatory outcome, with most research not following through with social action or education (Smith, 1993; Robinson, 1996). However, it is not within the means of this study to instigate some change or social action. Rather, the intention of this research lies at the beginning level of social action – attempting to understand more fully, the perception and intricacies of the position and related roles of early childhood teachers within a primary school setting.

It was anticipated that participation of early childhood teachers in the survey questionnaire and face-to-face interviews would provide opportunities for consciousness raising whereby teachers were asked to reflect on their own actions, roles and position within the school context. This process may, in effect, raise awareness and lessen "the victimization that people impose on themselves from within or that is forced on them from without" (Luke, 1991, p. 22).

### **Problems with teacher leadership scales**

Problems with many existing teacher leadership scales have been highlighted previously (Waugh, Boyd, & Corrie, 2001). In general, very few teacher leadership scales have been based on a multi-aspect model that encompasses a large number of the main aspects of leadership. In addition, most scales have not been applicable to

early childhood educators. The most common method of measuring aspects of teacher leadership have been based on the well known Likert scale (for example see Klecker & Loadman, 1996) in which each item is rated according to a simple response scale. However, it has been argued that the Likert response format does not provide continuity between the response categories of agree and disagree. That is, the response categories of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree are not ordered from low to high and represent a poor measurement scale. If a middle or neutral category is provided, it becomes what Andrich (1997) referred to as the “catch-all” category where people who do not understand or do not want to answer the question and those who are undecided, respond. Further, if the neutral category is omitted to counter the “catch-all” criticism, respondents would be forced to answer with agree or disagree. This forced answer may not reflect their attitude to the item and thus cause problems in interpretation or drawing conclusions (de Vaus, 1991).

A further problem with existing leadership scales is that they more commonly measure respondents’ reports of *how I am* or actual leadership traits. Research has indicated that teachers may have high ideals, but face various constraints that may influence their ability to put these ideals into practice (Ayers, 1992; Hawkey, 1996; Kuzmic, 1994; Wein, 1996). To obtain broader insight into the concept of teacher leadership in early childhood education, *how I would like to be* (ideal leadership) and *how I am* (actual leadership) should be measured at the same time and calibrated on the same scale.

Another criticism of many leadership scales is that items are often not grouped in their sub-scales on the questionnaire and consequently, the respondents are not always aware of what aspect of leadership is being measured. Knowledge of what is being measured may aid respondents’ perception or correct interpretation of the question being asked. In accordance with traditional measurement procedure, positively and negatively worded items are often mixed in many questionnaires to avoid the fixed response syndrome. It has been suggested that this may cause an interaction effect between items when modern measurement models are used (Andrich & van Schoulbreck, 1989). Consequently, it is suggested that all items be written in a positive format if modern measurement models are to be used.

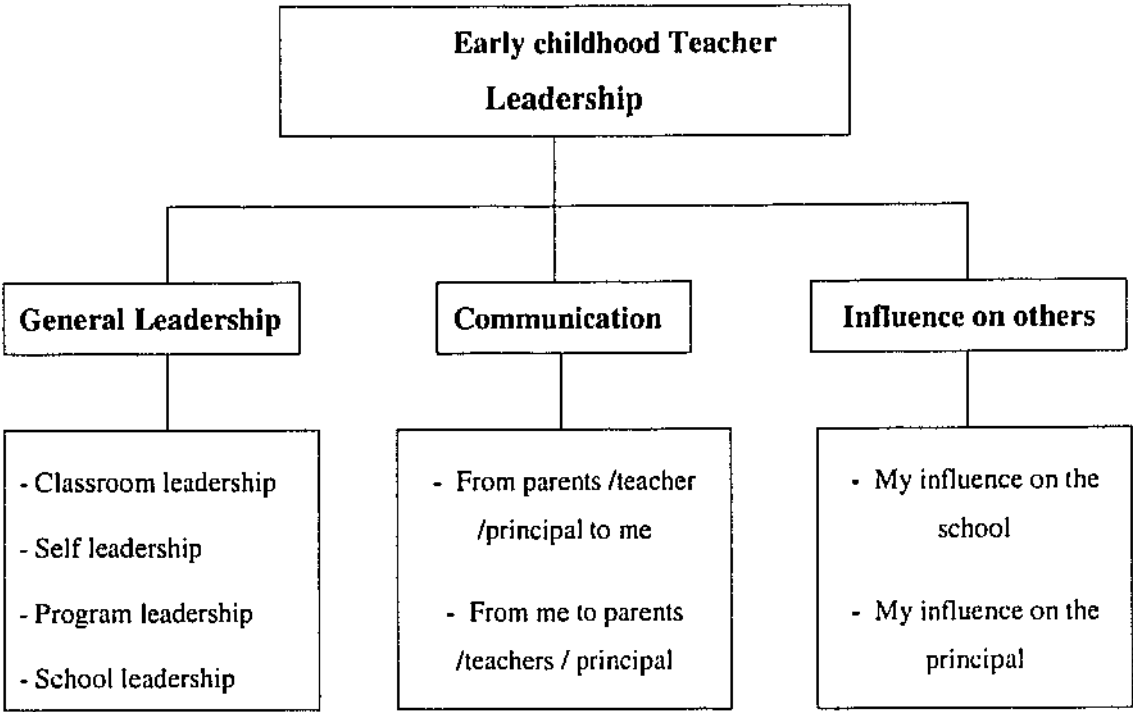
The availability of modern measurement models (and their computer programs) leads to a final problem with existing leadership scales in that most have been analysed with traditional measurement programs and ordinal level scales. Modern measurement programs are now available to create interval level measures in which item difficulties and teacher leadership measures can be calibrated on the same scale. Such programs can also test the conceptual structure of teacher leadership and its dimensional nature (Andrich, 1988,a,b; Andrich, Lyne, Sheridan, & Luo, 1998; Rasch, 1980/1960; Waugh, 1999a, 1999b). In addition, there is evidence that analysis using Rasch measurement models is appropriate for measuring attitude variables (Andrich, 1985, 1982; Waugh, 1999a, 1999b; Wright & Masters, 1982, 1981). In order to overcome the problems identified with existing teacher leadership scales, a new model of Early Childhood Teacher Leadership was developed.

### **A model of Early Childhood Teacher Leadership**

A review of the literature identified some important elements of teacher leadership in early childhood education. These elements included, being able to influence others (Hayden, 1996; Rodd, 1994, 1997a; Silva, Gimbert & Nolan, 2000); being confident, assertive and understanding of self and others (Halliwell, 1992; Makin, 1996; Rodd, 1994; Stone, 1995); developing partnerships with parents, a democratic leadership style and advocacy for young children (Bloom & Sheerer, 1992; Fleeer, 1996; Kagan, 1994; Moyles, 1996); engaging in critical reflection and collaboration (Brookfield, 1995; Firestone, 1996; National Working Party on Competency Standards, 1996); developing an effective classroom (Good & Brophy, 1991); and having good interpersonal and intrapersonal skills, and a positive self-concept (Cartwright, 1999; Davies & Polinitz, 1994; Pajares, 1996; Rodd, 1987).

These elements of teacher leadership, together with interviews with five key informants, led to the development of a model of early childhood teacher leadership. The five informants included a university lecturer in early childhood education and four early childhood teachers, three of whom were in current practice. The informants were deemed by the researcher to have clear insights into the issue of leadership in early childhood education within the school milieu and they were used to confirm initial conceptions and as a source of further understandings and ideas

(Geddes, 1993). The model of early childhood teacher leadership was devised along the lines of, and included some items from, a model of self-concept developed and subsequently supported through analysis by Waugh (1998). The model is conceptualised as being a multi-aspect model and includes three first order variables of general leadership, communication, and influence on others. Each of these first order variables consist of two or four second order variables outlined in Figure 2.



**Figure 2:** A model of early childhood teacher leadership.  
Source: compiled by the author from the literature review.

Each of the second order variables had a sub-set of corresponding stem-items. For example, the second order variable of Classroom Leadership comprised seven stem-items including *I take a leadership role*, *I share decision-making* and *I am willing to take calculated risks* (see appendix B for the full scale).

The conceptual design of the model included the notion that teacher leadership is comprised of an ideal component [how I would like to be] and actual or real component [how I am]. Hence, teachers were expected to rate each stem-item in terms of both their ideal and real perception of leadership. It was expected that a scale of early childhood teacher leadership could be created using a computer program and a measurement model (Rasch) to calibrate all the item ‘difficulites’ (that is, order the items from ‘easy’ to ‘hard’), and the teacher leadership scores from

'low' to 'high' on the same scale. In effect, this means that as the items increase in difficulty on the scale, the respondents will need a higher teacher leadership score to answer them positively. That is, it was expected that the most difficult items would only be answered positively by teachers who had high leadership scores, or conversely, teachers with low leadership scores would find it difficult to answer the 'hard' items positively.

Underlying the creation of the early childhood teacher leadership scale were several assumptions. It was surmised that the first order variables could be ordered by 'difficulty' along a continuum or scale of teacher leadership. The expectation at the outset was that leadership characteristics would be the 'easiest' first order variable to achieve most of the time, followed by communication, and with influence on others being the 'hardest' to achieve most of the time. Similarly, it was expected that for each item of the first order variables, *how I would like to be* would be located at an 'easier' position on the scale than the corresponding rating of *how I am*. In other words, it was expected that teachers would find it 'easier' to have high ideal leadership characteristics most of the time than real leadership characteristics.

The model was designed to include variables which were expected to range in difficulty from 'easy' to 'hard'. Ensuring the scale contained items of varying 'difficulties' helped reduce the occurrence of 'inappropriate components' and 'response instability' (see Kuncel & Fiske, 1974). Within each sub-set of second order variables, it was also expected that the stem-items could be ordered to form a pattern of responses that were of increasing 'difficulty', on average, from 'easy' to 'hard'. For example, in the second order variable of Classroom Leadership, it may be easy for teachers to say they share decision-making (item 7), harder to say they were willing to take calculated risks (item 5), and hardest to say they take a leadership role (item 13). In essence, teachers were expected, on average, to self-report any stem-item in an ordered pattern from 'easy' to 'hard'.

In order to gain further insights and understand more about early childhood teachers' self-reports of leadership, it was planned that follow-up interviews would be conducted with a number of teachers. It was expected that data from the initial analysis of the questionnaire would inform the direction of the interviews and suggest content for semi-structured questions.

## Summary

This chapter has reviewed the major theoretical and philosophical assumptions that underpin this study. Critical theory was identified as a major theoretical perspective to this study, with particular reference to the low status position of early childhood education within the school context. It was acknowledged that factors from contextual, cultural, intrapersonal and interpersonal sources influence the ability of teachers to articulate and communicate their early childhood pedagogy and philosophy. In addition, the writer's personal assumptions and expectations of early childhood teachers with regard to their leadership roles were highlighted. An overarching assumption is that early childhood teachers are ethically and professionally bound to communicate their pedagogy and philosophy to parents, principals, other staff, and the wider community in order to advocate for young children. In the final section of this chapter, the conceptual design of the model of early childhood teacher leadership to be tested in this study was outlined. The next chapter discusses measurement related to teacher leadership and explains the instrument devised for measuring early childhood teacher leadership.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### MEASUREMENT AND QUESTIONNAIRE

This chapter begins with a description of the new teacher leadership scale for early childhood educators and its place in the survey questionnaire used in this study. Background to measurement of latent traits such as teacher leadership is then provided, followed by a discussion on the use of a Rasch model of measurement, in order to test the new teacher leadership scale. Finally, the pilot test of the questionnaire is discussed.

#### **A new teacher leadership questionnaire**

As outlined in the preceding chapter, the new model of early childhood teacher leadership was devised to overcome the problems with existing models of teacher leadership. The model comprised three first order aspects of General Leadership, Communication and Influence, and a number of second order aspects (refer to Figure 2). The items were grouped under their sub-scale headings so it would be clear to teachers what was being measured and all items were written in a positive sense with an ordered response format. The response format on the questionnaire involved two aspects. One was for *How I am* (to measure the actual or real aspect) and the other for *How I would like to be* (to measure the ideal aspect). The ordered response categories of- none or almost none of the time; some of the time; most of the time; and all or nearly all of the time- were devised to provide a good measurement structure. For each item, teachers were required to enter a response in both the *How I am* and *How I would like to be* columns. In total, there were 142 stem-items – 71 related to the *How I am* column and 71 to the corresponding *How I would like to be* column. A sample is provided below and the full scale, the basis of the survey questionnaire, is provided in Appendix A.

**Directions:** Please rate each statement according to the following response format and place a number corresponding to *how you would like to be* and *how you believe that you are* on the appropriate line opposite each statement.

All the time or nearly all the time	put 3
Most of the time	put 2
Some of the time	put 1
None of the time or almost none of the time	put 0

**Example**

If your leadership characteristic, *how you would like to be* is that you would be able to handle a crisis well *all the time*, put 3. If in practice (*how you actually are*) you handle a crisis well *some of the time*, put 1.

Item 1	Handle a crisis well	1	3
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Item No.	Item	How I am	How I would like to be
1-2	I handle a classroom crisis well	---	---
3-4	I set clear standards	---	---
5-6	I am willing to take calculated risks	---	---
7-8	I share decision making	---	---
9-10	I convey clear role responsibilities to other staff	---	---
11-12	I motivate and inspire other staff to do their best	---	---
13-14	I desire to take a leadership role	---	---

The survey questionnaire is comprised of three sections. Section A contains ten biographic questions seeking such information as qualifications, number of years teaching experience, gender of teacher /principal, and information (on site/off site, number of preprimary teachers in the school) about the setting of the current teaching position. This section thus provides information on which a description of the

sample is derived. Section B is the self-designed early childhood teacher leadership scale (see sample above). Section C seeks answers to four open-ended questions about strategies used by early childhood teachers and factors that help or hinder them communicating their pedagogy and philosophy. For three of the four questions, respondents were asked to consider the question in relation to the principal, children's parents and other teachers in the school. For example,

b. Factors that hinder my explaining about the early childhood way of teaching to the following people include:

Principal \_\_\_\_\_

Children's parents \_\_\_\_\_

Other teachers \_\_\_\_\_

The final open-ended question sought further comments from respondents about leadership in early childhood education with particular regard to explaining early childhood philosophy.

### **Measurement models**

Measurement can be viewed as a process in which numbers are used to link concepts to indicators on a continuum (Punch, 1998). Traditionally, the most common means of measuring attitudes have been based on classical test theory with the use of Thurstone and Likert scales. However it is now recognised that these methods have deficiencies and that *latent trait theory* also referred to as *item response theory* is a more desirable model for measurement (Andrich, 1982; Hambleton & Swaminathan, 1985; Molenaar, 1995). Item Response Theory is based on the notion of the relationship between the observable responses to test items and the unobservable traits assumed to underlie responses to items on a test. A mathematical formula is used to describe this relationship (Hambleton & Swaminathan, 1985; Rasch, 1980/1960) and is the foundation of the measurement model. The attempt to obtain formal measurements through the use of such models should lead to a "greater understanding of the variable or trait in question" (Andrich, 1997, p. 878).

Andrich (1989) described five basic requirements for measuring social variables. The first centred on the notion of 'unidimensionality' and a continuum. In order to measure a trait, it must be possible to make such comparisons as there being 'more' or 'less' of the trait. Therefore, an instrument is required that allows the difficulty of the items that measure the trait, and the people measures of the trait to be plotted on to a linear continuum, thus forming a scale which conveys meaningful measurement (see Andrich, 1989, p. 9 for the equation).

The second requirement was based on the need for formalising measurement with the use of statistical models. The use of statistical models means that differences between item and person parameters can be determined and checks made on the "consistency of the estimates" thus providing internal consistency for the scale (see Andrich, 1989, p. 9 for the equation).

The third and fourth requirements for measurement were related to the consistency of item locations on the continuum. 'Additivity' must be met by the item locations whereby each item must hold a determined scale value (equal distances between locations) in relation to the other items, or it is rejected (see Andrich, 1989, p. 9 for the equation). Item locations should also be invariant across groups of people. It is a requirement that the same measures or scale values can be obtained regardless of which items are used to estimate the measures and regardless of which individuals were used to calibrate the items. In particular, the attitudes or opinions of those who constructed the scale should not affect the item measures. The fifth requirement of measurement suggested by Andrich was that data must fit the criteria or requirements (ultimately contained within a measurement model) in order for valid measurement to occur.

One family of measurement models based on the Item Response Theory and that satisfies the requirements of measurement as suggested by Andrich (1989), is the Rasch models which have been hailed to be "simple" yet "very powerful" models of measurement (Hambleton & Swaminathan, 1985, p. 4). It has also been noted that Rasch models incorporate the best elements of the Thurstone and Likert approaches (Andrich, 1982; Wright & Stone, 1979). The original Rasch model developed by Danish mathematician Georg Rasch in the 1950's, was the Simple Logistic Model (Rasch, 1980/1960) which was used to analyse dichotomous responses. Subsequent work has extended Rasch models to incorporate polychotomous responses where

three or more response categories are used to compare measures (Anderson, 1995; Andrich, 1988a, 1988b). Central to the notion of objective measurement in Rasch models, also termed specific objectivity or sample free measures (Andrich, 1988b; Douglas, 1982; Wright & Masters, 1982), is that both items and people can be calibrated on the same scale. That is, differences between pairs of person measures and differences between pairs of item difficulties are expected to be sample independent, which is a requirement of measurement.

### **Measuring teacher leadership**

The intent of this study was to measure aspects of leadership in order to test a model. Many characteristics of leadership cannot be observed directly and are thus referred to as latent traits. In order to infer the degree to which a person possesses leadership traits, it was necessary to produce a set of items (or leadership characteristics) from which reliable inference could be made to the degree of presence or absence of the latent trait of teacher leadership. However, measuring all the items separately and then using correlation techniques to determine relationships between them could not test the resultant model of teacher leadership. It was necessary to test the model by constructing a proper scale of teacher leadership. One way to do this was to calibrate all the item difficulties and all the teacher leadership scores on the same scale using a Rasch measurement model (Andrich, 1988a, 1988b; Rasch, 1980/1960) with the computer program Rasch Unidimensional Measurement Models, referred to as RUMM 2010 from here on (Andrich, Sheridan, Lyne & Luo, 2000).

Use of this Rasch measurement program ensures that only items that contribute logically and consistently to the measurement of teacher leadership are included in the scale. Any items that do not fit on the scale in a consistent pattern with the other items, that is, items that contribute 'noise', are rejected. The most likely reason for an item to be rejected at this stage is that it is not consistently measuring an element relevant to teacher leadership. The RUMM 2010 computer program aligns items that fit the model from 'easy' to 'hard' and Teacher Leadership measures from low to high. These measures of teacher leadership and item 'difficulties' are calibrated on the same scale and it is determined whether teachers agree on the location (or difficulties) of the items along the scale. In other words, the

program ascertains whether teachers who report high, medium and low teacher leadership scores agree to the item 'difficulties' aligned from 'easy' to 'hard'. An item is rejected as measuring 'noise' if there is no agreement among teachers about its level of 'difficulty' or location on the scale.

It is acknowledged at this point that the words 'easy' and 'hard' may be awkward in some instances of referring to aspects of Teacher Leadership or items in the Model of Teacher Leadership. However, there are no other words that can be substituted to describe adequately the 'difficulties' of items for attitudes or self-views. In this study, there is a sense in which the Teacher Leadership items are 'easy' or 'hard'. For example, items 115/116 *I am asked questions about my philosophy by other teachers* were determined to be among those with a higher 'difficulty' for both the real and ideal modes. In this sense, the majority of teachers found this item 'very hard' or 'hard' to answer positively. That is, most responded with *none of the time* or *some of the time* rather than *most of the time*, or *all of the time*. In contrast, items 21/22 *I achieve what I set out to achieve* were determined to be among those of a lower 'difficulty'. That is, the majority of teachers found this item 'very easy' or 'easy' to answer positively in the ideal and real modes respectively, indicating they achieved what they set out to achieve *most of the time* or *all of the time*.

### **Rasch measurement model**

In this study, the Extended Logistic Model of Rasch (Andrich, 1988a) was used with the RUMM 2010 computer program (Andrich, Sheridan, Lyne, & Luo, 2000) to analyse the data and create a scale of Teacher Leadership for early childhood educators. As mentioned previously, item 'difficulties' and teacher measures are calibrated on the same scale with items aligned from easy to hard and teacher measures of leadership from low to high. The differences between teacher measures and item 'difficulties' are expected to be sample free in that "it must not matter which sample of persons is used to calibrate these items" (Wright & Masters, 1982, p. 5). It is acknowledged here that more recently, conflicting evidence on this point has been presented (De Mars, 2001; Fan, 1998; Lawson, 1991). These studies suggest that in order to be sample free, measures need to be 'very' unidimensional and it is implied that Rasch measurement models are superfluous if classical

summing of scores provides similar results. However, it can be argued that Rasch analysis is necessary to produce a proper scale with both measures and item 'difficulties' calibrated together. In addition, Rasch analysis deletes items that are not influenced by the unidimensional trait, thus eliminating 'noise' from the scale. Comparable processes cannot be achieved using traditional measurement.

In order to obtain a measure on a ratio scale, there must be a zero point from which to start counting. However, an absolute zero on a scale is essentially beyond definition and in practice, zero is often a convenient reference point (Wright & Masters, 1982). In this study there is no true zero point as there is no item that represents zero Teacher Leadership. Zero on the scale in the present study is the mean of the item difficulties, calibrated to be zero. The RUMM 2010 program (2000) estimates parameters to create an ordered threshold structure, in line with the ordered response categories of the items. Within a four category response set (as in the present study), there are three thresholds or boundaries and it is necessary for these to be aligned with the order of the response categories if there is to be satisfactory discrimination or differentiation between ability measures. In the present study, ability measures are the teacher leadership scores and in effect, teachers with leadership scores at a threshold between two response categories have a 50 percent chance of answering in either category. The unit of measure used to calculate the item difficulty and measures of teacher leadership is called the logit, which in essence is the log odds of answering the item correctly.

Parameter estimates are substituted back into the model and the RUMM 2010 program examines the difference between the expected values predicted from the model and the observed values using two tests of fit. The first is the item-trait test-of-fit (a chi-square) which examines the consistency of the item parameters across the teacher leadership measures for each item and provides an overall test-of-fit (see Andrich & van Schoubroeck, 1989, p. 479-480 for the equations). Essentially, a consensus is obtained for all items across teachers with differing scores of leadership. The second test-of-fit is the person-item interaction which examines the response patterns for teachers across items and for items across teachers. The residual between the expected estimate and the actual values for each teacher-item is summed over all items for each teacher and over all teachers for each item (see Andrich & van Schoubroeck, 1989, p. 482 for the equations). When the data fit the measurement

model, the fit statistics approximate a distribution with a mean near zero and a standard deviation near one. Negative values indicate a response pattern that fits the model too closely, probably because response dependencies are present (see Andrich, 1985). Conversely, positive values indicate a poor fit to the model, possibly due to other measures or 'noise' being present.

### **Pilot test of questionnaire**

An informal trial of the response categories for some items in the instrument was conducted with four colleagues. Their feedback indicated respondents might prefer, or find it easier to respond to, stem-items in the order of *how I am* followed by *how I would like to be*, rather than responding in the reverse. A formal pilot test of the survey instrument was conducted with 33 early childhood teachers. The sample was obtained by approaching teachers known to the researcher and asking them to nominate other early childhood teachers they thought would be willing to take part, and so on. This process has been referred to as the 'snowballing technique' (Bouma, 2000; Oppenheim, 1992).

Each participant was asked to complete the original 86 stem-item questionnaire and provide either verbal or written feedback on several aspects. Specifically, each teacher was asked to consider the following, adapted from Bell (1987, p. 65).

1. How long did it take to complete the questionnaire?
2. Were the instructions clear?
3. Were the response format categories workable?
4. Did you object to answering any questions?
5. Do you think any major aspect has been left out?
6. Any other comments?

Respondents reported varying times taken to complete the questionnaire, ranging from 20 to 45 minutes, with most reporting around 30 minutes. One teacher made the comment "It took a lot longer than I thought it would". None of the 33 teachers reported any problems with the response format or clarity of instructions. However, four teachers pointed out some difficulty in responding to three items. The



four teachers indicated that the item *I find arguing my point of view easier with same sex persons than with opposite sex persons* was difficult to answer as it differed to the format of the other questions. That is, the requirement of the model for all items to be worded in a positive sense compromised the clarity of this item. As one teacher wrote “I had to stop and think about this one”. Subsequent discussion was not able to produce another way to write the item while keeping the wording in a positive sense. With no alternative coming to light and the researcher not wanting to discard the item, a decision was made to try rewording the item slightly to *I can argue my point of view easier with same sex persons than with opposite sex persons*.

Two other items were highlighted as possible problem areas by teachers’ responses. The items concerned were *I push for male and female staff to have equal say in decision making in my school* and *I push for preprimary staff to share equal status with primary staff in my school*. In response to these items, three teachers wrote in effect that teachers did have equal say or status in their school. Subsequently, the words *if necessary I would...* were inserted to the front of both questions, in an attempt to make them more relevant.

In its original form, the questionnaire contained 45 stem-items in a section heading of ‘self-concept’. These were taken from the self-concept questionnaire developed by Waugh (1998). However, these questions elicited the most comments from participants in the trial. Several teachers questioned the relevance of some of these items to leadership. For example, in the category of ‘opposite-sex peer self-concept’, the item *I get along well with others of the opposite sex*; in the category of physical self-concept, the item *I am happy with the way I look*; and in the personal self-concept, the item *I have respect for myself*. Consistent with verbal feedback from other respondents, one teacher wrote, “Self esteem questions were uncomfortable to think about. I really didn’t like that section” and another wrote “I don’t see what these [items] have got to do with leadership”.

Given the concerns raised by respondents’ comments about items relating to self-concept, a decision was made to discard the majority of these from the final questionnaire. De Vaus (1991, p. 101) pointed out that if questions in the trial stage “were perceived as irrelevant to the stated purpose of the survey...or produce respondent hesitation, reluctance, or refusal to answer”, then they are likely to result in a high incidence of non-response in the final survey. Some items from the self-

concept section deemed by the researcher to be 'safe' or less invasive were included in the final questionnaire. For example, *I am a confident person*, *I am sure of myself at school*, and *I am proud of my achievements at school*. These items were included within the subheadings of Self-Leadership and Program Leadership. After deleting the majority of items in the self-concept section, the final version of the questionnaire was reduced from 86 stem-items to 72 stem-items. This meant that the time taken to complete the questionnaire should also have been reduced. Teachers made no additional comments about the questionnaire in general, and no comments were made about any important aspects being omitted. Apart from minor changes to the wording of some items, no further changes were made.

### **Trial measure of teacher leadership**

Data from the 33 trial questionnaires were analysed with the RUMM (1998) computer program to obtain initial feedback on the conceptual structure of the early childhood teacher leadership scale in the questionnaire. Due to the concerns raised by teachers about the self-concept items, and because this section comprised a high proportion of missing data, a decision was made to analyse only the teacher leadership section of the questionnaire.

Of the 104 item scale, thirty three stem-items had at least one item (real or ideal) that did not fit the measurement model. There are two possible reasons for items not fitting the scale. One is that teachers may not answer response categories consistently and logically for that item and this is indicated by disordered thresholds. Another reason is that some teachers may not agree on the location of an item on the scale. For example, some teachers with high leadership scores may find a particular item easy, while others with high leadership scores may find the same item more difficult, which would be revealed as an inconsistent response pattern. Despite the number of items that did not fit the model, a decision was made to include them (some in modified form as discussed earlier) in the final questionnaire due to the small sample size in the trial. The Index of Teacher Separability (or reliability as it is referred to in traditional measurement) was 0.968 which means that the proportion of observed variance considered true was 97 percent. The item-trait tests of fit indicated that the item difficulties were consistent across the range of teacher leadership scores along the scale. Overall, the trial data gave positive indications that

a good scale of early childhood teacher leadership had been constructed, with the internal reliability very high. The RUMM program measures the power of the tests-of-fit on a five-point scale of Excellent, Good, Reasonable, Low and Too low. For the trial data, the power of the tests-of-fit was deemed excellent.

## **Summary**

A new scale of Teacher Leadership for early childhood teachers has been devised in response to problems with existing models of teacher leadership. Background has been provided on the measurement of latent traits such as Teacher Leadership, and the use of a Rasch model of measurement in order to test the new Teacher Leadership scale has been discussed. Finally, the pilot test of the questionnaire was described and outcomes that helped improve the quality of the questionnaire were discussed. The next chapter reviews the method of the present study.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **METHOD**

This chapter begins with a brief review of methods used in similar studies, followed by a discussion to support the design of the present study. Next, the sample and population is described and the general procedure for phases one and two of the study is outlined. Finally, the process of data collection using the questionnaire is explained, followed by a description of the trial and data collection using the semi-structured interview schedule.

#### **Methods of similar studies**

The literature has identified several factors that influence teachers' abilities to demonstrate leadership. Examples of such factors are included in a summary of research that investigated the relationships between teacher beliefs and significant variables in school life. Kagan (1992) compiled a synthesis of selected studies on teacher beliefs. The types of beliefs under investigation included teachers' sense of self-efficacy, perceptions of the attitudes held by parents of their pupils and teachers' practical arguments. Of the 25 studies cited, 16 included interviews in the methodology, six used questionnaires, and three utilised both questionnaires and interviews. Four of these studies were based on a quantitative approach using a questionnaire. The remaining 21 studies were based on a qualitative or combined qualitative and quantitative approach.

More specifically, Hebert, Lee and Williamson (1998) used a survey method to investigate the relationship between teachers' sense of efficacy and their experience in schools. The questionnaire was designed to obtain data that would enable quantitative and qualitative comparisons. The instrument included a modified version of a teacher efficacy construct, using a Likert scale and open-ended questions to elicit further information. It was suggested that the inclusion of open-ended questions added "depth and understanding to numerical ratings, and ...[provided]

evidence supporting the experiential and contextual underpinnings of [self-efficacy] beliefs” (Hebert, Lee, & Williamson, 1998, p. 224). Although questionnaires remain the “predominant” means of collecting data on educational leadership (Howe, 1994) the benefits of combining both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection has been noted. Howe (1994, p. 3283) in his discussions on future directions of research in educational leadership called for “improved efforts to integrate qualitative and quantitative methods...in a single study”.

## **Design**

The present research is a descriptive self-report study (Gay, 1987) whereby information was solicited from individuals using a survey questionnaire and follow-up face-to-face interviews. Hence the study was conducted in two phases. Phase one was comprised of the mailed survey instrument, while phase two incorporated the face-to-face interviews. It is acknowledged that much more in-depth data can be obtained using an interview method than is possible with a questionnaire. It is also acknowledged that engaging in quantitative methods of data collection is not consistent with a critical theory perspective which informs this study. However, on consideration of the advantages and convenience of a survey method, this study employed a combination of quantitative (survey) and qualitative (interview) methods. Creswell (1994) referred to such combining of qualitative and quantitative methods as the “mixed methodology design” and stated that by using both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection, a concept can be better understood or explored. Quantitative methods enable objective comparisons and generalizations to be made while qualitative methods provide more depth and meaning to the participants’ perspectives (Bouma, 2000; Punch, 1998). More specifically, de Vaus (1991, p. 57) suggested “in-depth interviewing can give the researcher insight into the meaning of behavior and attitudes expressed in questionnaires”, while Jick (1979) suggested that inclusion of a survey in the method should also “contribute to greater confidence in the generalizability of results”(p. 604).

The use of a combination of methods also enables ‘triangulation’ of data collected; that is, a check on the reliability and validity of the information provided by the early childhood teachers. This study employed both simultaneous and sequential triangulation (Creswell, 1994). In phase one, opportunities for

simultaneous triangulation occurred as the research questions were addressed in both the quantitative and qualitative sections of the survey instrument. Sequential triangulation was also an element of this study because initial findings from phase one – the survey questionnaire, became the basis for planning phase two of the study – the face-to-face interviews. This process enabled findings to be confirmed, and in some instances, extended. It was also recognised that in the process of triangulation, some findings may be inconsistent or contradictory. Where this occurred, the information was checked and explored further with the early childhood teachers during the interviews, thus providing evidence for the reliability and validity of the information. It can be argued that such findings add value to the study and, in some cases, provide evidence for new perspectives (Creswell, 1994; Mathison, 1988).

Considering the advantages of mixed method designs, Creswell (1994) collated various authors' suggestions and proposed four reasons (five with triangulation) for combining qualitative and quantitative methods in a study:

1. Complimentary, in that overlapping and different facets of a phenomenon may emerge.
  2. Developmentally, wherein the first method is used sequentially to help inform the second method.
  3. Initiation, wherein contradictions and fresh perspectives emerge.
  4. Expansion, wherein the mixed methods add scope and breadth to a study.
- (Creswell, 1994, p. 175)

Each of these advantages are encompassed in the purpose of using mixed methods in this study. In support, Miles & Huberman (1994, p. 41) suggested qualitative data can aid the analysis of quantitative data by “validating, interpreting, clarifying and illustrating quantitative findings, as well as through strengthening and revising theory”.

The purpose of using a cross-sectional mail survey was to obtain answers to each of the five questions proposed at the outset of this study. Essentially, question one dealing with early childhood teachers' perceptions of their leadership role, and questions two and three relating to the development and testing of the model, were addressed in the quantitative section of the survey instrument. Questions four and five - factors that enhance or constrain teachers' abilities, and the strategies they use to articulate and communicate their pedagogy- were addressed in the qualitative

section of the instrument (open-ended questions). Through surveying a sample of early childhood teachers in Western Australia, generalizations could be made and inferences drawn about the reported characteristics and beliefs of the whole population (Creswell, 1994). Further understanding and insights relating to questions one, four and five were attained through the face-to-face interviews.

A mailed survey was the preferred method for initial data collection in phase one of the study for several reasons. A survey is convenient to use because it can be administered to a large number of people from widely dispersed geographical areas and is relatively economical when compared to the cost of face-to-face interviews in terms of money and time (Oppenheim, 1992; Rosnow and Rosenthal, 1996). There is also a relatively rapid turn around of data collection using the survey method (Creswell, 1994). In addition, surveys offer a form of anonymity where by respondents may be more willing to reveal details than if in a face-to-face interview situation.

Semi-structured face-to-face interviews were chosen as the preferred method to validate and triangulate data obtained from the survey, and to add scope and breadth to the study. The interview method has the advantage of obtaining in-depth data that is not possible with a survey (Gay, 1987; Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell, & Alexander, 1991)). The interview format also allows for flexibility and the opportunity to clarify questions and responses with the subjects in order to understand more about a concept than may be possible with a one-off survey (Rosnow & Rosenthal, 1996; Fontana and Frey, 1994). The interviews were based on validating, clarifying, and seeking further information, on issues identified from the questionnaire. Patton (1990) suggested that using a semi-structured approach (referred to by Patton as the interview guide approach) allows important issues or topics to be outlined in advance. This process also allows for addressing gaps identified in earlier data collection and following a semi-structured interview format means that data collection is "somewhat systematic for each interviewee (Patton, 1990, p. 288).

### **Population and sample**

In this study, subjects were from the population of approximately 1000 Western Australian state government school early childhood educators who were

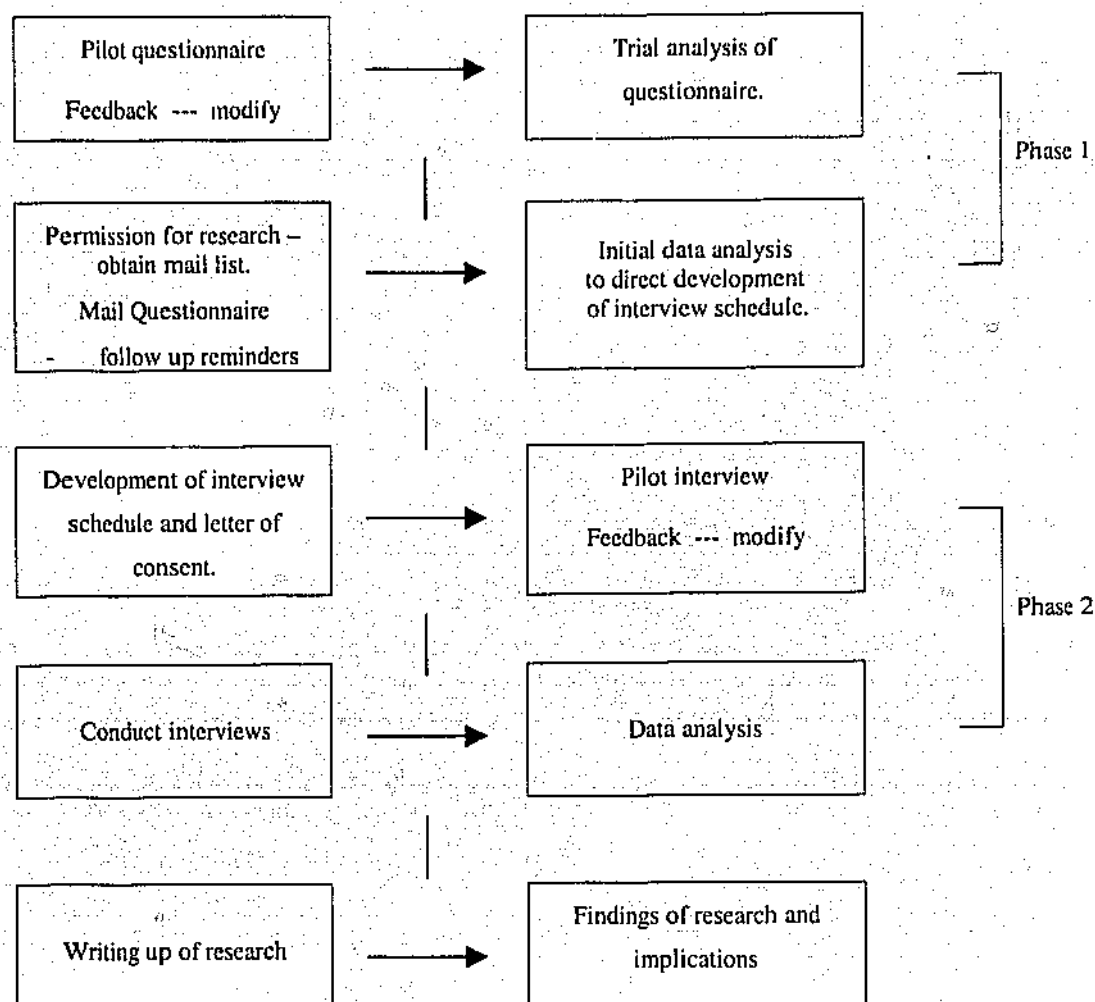
teachers of kindergarten /preprimary children aged 3 – 5 years. The population comprised teachers working full or part time with a permanent or temporary status, in metropolitan or country schools. Despite placing limits on the generality of findings (Dominowski, 1980), a decision was made to use a convenience sample in both phase one and two of the study due to limited resources and restricted knowledge of actual numbers of early childhood teachers in each school. In Phase One, the sample was 272 early childhood teachers who volunteered to answer the questionnaire.

A rigid sample for the interviews in phase two of this study was not determined at the outset. Informed by Strauss and Corbin (1990), the sampling decision evolved as the research progressed. Bearing in mind that there is little or no benefit in continuing the process of interviewing individuals once saturation of data or concepts is achieved (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), the end number of subjects for phase two of the study was 20 teachers. Sampling for the interviews was also 'purposive' to some extent, using the 'snowball technique' referred to previously (Bouma, 2000; Oppenheim, 1992). This involved approaching those teachers known to the researcher or those who had volunteered first and asking them to nominate others they know and so on. It was anticipated that most teachers who volunteered to be interviewed would tend to be relatively confident. So in an endeavour to achieve some balance, three early childhood teachers who were known to lack some confidence were approached. All three indicated they would be willing to participate in an interview. It was interesting to note however, that two of the three teachers said in effect that they were not sure that they would be much 'help' to the research.

## **Procedure**

Initial approval to conduct the research was obtained from the University Ethics Committee. Following this, permission to conduct the research in schools in Western Australia was obtained from the State Government Education Department. The following diagram outlines the procedure for collection and analysis of data for phases one and two of the study. Though not evident in the diagram, it was expected there would be some overlap in the collection of data and subsequent analysis. The collection of data, including the development and piloting of both questionnaire and interview schedule, spanned a period of nine months.





**Figure 3:** Procedure for data collection and analysis

### **Data collection: Questionnaire**

Due to privacy issues, the Education Department was not able to provide a mailing list of early childhood teachers attached to primary schools. However, the Department did provide a contact list of all schools with preprimary students, together with the suggestion that the surveys be addressed to the 'preprimary teacher' and providing multiple copies to schools with large preprimary enrolments. Following these guidelines, copies of the survey questionnaire were sent with reply-paid envelopes to 362 schools, 85 of which were in the country and 277 in the metropolitan area. A decision was made to omit those schools with fewer than 15 preprimary enrolments, as it was not guaranteed that these schools would have an early childhood trained teacher on staff. Schools from which early childhood

practitioners were involved in the trial process were also omitted, unless the teacher had volunteered to participate in the final questionnaire.

The covering letter of the questionnaire was taken as informed consent, based on the condition of anonymity (see Appendix A). In an endeavour to maximise the response rate, a follow-up letter was sent to the same schools two weeks later, reminding teachers about the questionnaire and urging their participation. A request was also made in the letter for teachers willing to be interviewed at a later date to contact the researcher (see Appendix A). A decision was made to limit the follow-up to the one reminder due to considerations of cost and the fact that in ensuring anonymity, there was no way of knowing from which schools responses had already been received. Questionnaires were returned via the post in the pre-paid envelopes to the university mail room. Each batch of returns was date stamped on the day they arrived and subsequently numbered by the researcher.

#### **Data collection: Interviews -development and pilot test of interview schedule**

An initial analysis of the open-ended questions in the qualitative section of the questionnaire was conducted to determine common themes or key issues that could be explored in more depth (see chapters eight to eleven for further discussion). The themes and issues identified became the basis for the interview schedule (see Appendix E) which was subsequently piloted informally with two preprimary teachers. Ensuing discussion revealed that the general perception of traditional leadership is likely to be foremost in teacher's minds and that not all teachers would be aware of the concept of teacher leadership, especially in the context of articulating and communicating early childhood pedagogy and philosophy. Consequently, it was suggested to emphasise more strongly at the beginning of the interview that leadership in the context of this research was related to articulation and communication of early childhood philosophy. In addition, the trial highlighted the need for further prompts in the interview schedule. Apart from minor alterations to the wording of some questions, no other changes were made to the interview schedule.

An initial sample for the interviews was established with 12 early childhood teachers known to the researcher. The 12 teachers were approached and asked if they would be willing to participate in an interview about their perceptions of teacher

leadership. The teachers were then asked if they could nominate another teacher they thought would be willing to participate in an interview. In this manner, a total of 20 early childhood teachers were interviewed. At the outset, teachers were provided with an information statement and letter of consent (see Appendix D). This statement outlined the purpose of the interview and ensured teachers of confidentiality and anonymity, with the right to refuse to answer any question and to withdraw from the interview at any time. In addition, contact numbers were provided should the participant require further information at a later date. Once they had read the information and were satisfied, teachers were asked to sign a form of consent based on the conditions mentioned above, indicating their willingness to be interviewed. The time and place for the interview was set according to the interviewee's preferences. In four cases, where the teacher worked part time, their preference was to be interviewed in their own home. The remaining 16 interviews were scheduled in the teacher's non-contact or Duties Other Than Teaching time at their work place.

It is acknowledged that bias can emerge in interviews. For example the interviewer may seek answers that reflect their preconceived notions or ask leading questions. Bell (1987) suggested that while it is difficult to eliminate bias completely, the interviewer should be aware constantly and strive to remain objective. Patton (1990, P. 348) suggested that the interviewer should be committed to "record as fully and fairly as possible that interviewee's perspective. Some method of recording the verbatim responses of people being interviewed is, therefore, essential". Subsequently, teachers participating in the interview were asked for their permission to tape record the interview. An advantage of using a tape recorder is that there is more opportunity for the interview to progress along natural conversational lines (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell and Alexander (1991). Before the interview commenced, participants were shown the location of the pause button on the recorder and made aware of their right to stop the recording at any point in the interview. To address further the issue of bias, Patton (1990) suggested that the personal reactions of both interviewee and interviewer should be noted down during the interview. Patton (1990, p. 353) referred to this process as the beginning of analysis because "while the situation and data are fresh, insights can occur that might otherwise have been lost". However, it was felt that note taking during the interview

would be difficult and could possibly constrain or interrupt the flow. Indeed, Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell and Alexander (1991) suggested that rapport could be at risk if notes were taken during the interview process. Hence, a decision was made to note down reactions and impressions as soon after the interview as possible.

Another issue that arises in the process of conducting interviews is that of power relationships or status of standing between the interviewer and interviewee. Fontana and Frey (1994) cautioned the researcher against imposing their academic view on the respondent, while Punch (1998) highlighted the need for developing a relationship of equal standing between the researcher and interviewee. This issue is not perceived as a problem in the present study, as the researcher shares the same teaching background as the respondents and presented as a colleague of the teachers in the interview process. Some may view this as a bias in itself, with the researcher's own experiences in the same context influencing subsequent interpretations of meaning. However, the researcher, being aware of the potential of bias in this situation and endeavouring to remain conscious of the fact throughout the interview process, should go some way towards addressing this issue.

The average length of the interviews was 60 minutes, with some completed within 45 minutes and others extending past the one hour duration. None of the teachers declined to answer any of the questions, but three exercised their right to turn off the tape recorder at some point. These teachers did so to clarify some aspect before answering, or to provide themselves with more time to think. It was interesting to note that upon conclusion of the interview, and after the tape recorder had been turned off, three teachers shared further experiences with the researcher. It was not known for certain whether the experiences were added as an after thought or whether these teachers did not wish the account to be taped. One teacher appeared to realise her added account would probably be of interest and stated "I probably should have said this on tape for you" (20:d mem.o).

## **Limitations**

Time limitations are acknowledged as a constraint to this study. A survey was used to gather data initially, given its advantage of being economical in terms of time. Though enabling 'richer data' to be collected than in a one-off survey, the number of in-depth interviews was limited because of the large amount of time each

takes. However, an adequate number of interviews was determined during the course of data collection to ensure enough rich data was obtained.

It is acknowledged that data obtained through the use of the questionnaire and interview may not account fully for the beliefs and perceptions of the respondents. In particular, the subjects may respond to questions according to what they believe others will view as the appropriate response, rather than their personal belief. The assurance of anonymity and provision for open-ended responses in the questionnaire should address this concern. Similarly, a conscious endeavour to employ appropriate interview strategies, such as maintaining neutrality as outlined by Patton (1990), should have encouraged true responses. Moreover, it is acknowledged that these limitations are not the only ones to this study. Indeed, further limitations are noted in subsequent chapters.

## **Summary**

This chapter has presented the case for using a mixed method design combining both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection for this study. Following this, the sample population for the study was described and the general procedure incorporating phase one and phase two of the study was outlined. The process of data collection through the questionnaire was described as was the trial of and data collection via the interview schedule. In conclusion, the limitations of the study were discussed.

The next six chapters describe the process of data analysis, and present the results for phase one of the study, the survey questionnaire. The results are presented in three sections. Part A in Chapter Six comprises the summary of biographical details thus providing a description of the sample, while Part B in Chapter Seven presents the psychometric analysis of Early Childhood Teacher Leadership. Part C in Chapters Eight through to Eleven presents a summary of data from the open-ended questions.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **DATA ANALYSIS (PHASE ONE SECTION A): BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS**

This chapter presents the data obtained through the biographical questions from Section A of the questionnaire, thus providing a description of the sample of respondents. The chapter begins with a report on responses and an attempt to address the issue of response bias. Following this, a summary of biographical data is presented to provide a further description of the sample for this study. In conclusion, some pertinent aspects of respondents' backgrounds are highlighted.

#### **Responses**

A total of 283 questionnaires were returned, however, 11 of these could not be used due to large amounts of missing data. The remaining 272 questionnaires were presented for analysis. In addition to maximising the response rate in a survey, it is also necessary to address the issue of non-response bias (Creswell, 1994; Oppenheim, 1992). It is believed generally, that there are most likely to be differences between respondents and non-respondents in aspects relevant to the study being undertaken (de Vaus, 1991). Hence it is important to find out if non-responses are linked in some way to the research topic. More specifically, Rosnow and Rosenthal (1996) compiled a synthesis of characteristics of typical volunteers and non-volunteers. Among the nine characteristics were:

1. Volunteers tend to be higher than non-volunteers in the need for social approval.
2. Volunteers tend to be more sociable than non-volunteers.
3. Volunteers tend to be less authoritarian than non-volunteers.

(Rosnow and Rosenthal, 1996, p. 204).

Taken at face value, these three characteristics suggest that those who responded to the questionnaire in the first wave of returns would likely be less authoritarian but more sociable and have a higher need for approval from other staff in the school, than non-volunteers. These three characteristics are also a part of teachers' interpersonal skills enacted within a school setting. In turn, interpersonal skills affect teacher's abilities to exercise leadership in the school and are a focus of several items contained in the questionnaire of Teacher Leadership for Early Childhood Educators.

Creswell (1994) outlined two methods used to determine response bias. The first was to conduct a *wave analysis* which entails monitoring the responses to a select few questions week by week. In this method, responses in the last weeks of the data collection period are classified as 'almost' non-responses. If no significant difference is found when responses from the last weeks are compared with responses from the earlier weeks, then there is said to be a "strong case" for a lack of response bias (Creswell, 1994, p. 123). Such a process may be applied to the present study in the form of comparing the mean Teacher Leadership scores of the first 50 respondents to the mean Teacher Leadership scores of the last 50 respondents (deemed by this view to be 'almost non-respondents'). In doing so, there was not a great difference between mean scores with the mean of the first 50 Teacher Leadership scores 2.290 and the mean of the last 50 respondents 2.820. The overall mean of the Teacher Leadership scores for the 270 respondents (there was corrupted data for two of the 272 teachers' responses for Section B of the questionnaire) was 2.798. Hence there appeared little difference in applying this process to compare Teacher Leadership scores of early respondents to those deemed 'almost non-respondents'.

The second method for determining response bias outlined by Creswell, (1994) was a *respondent /non-respondent* check which involved contacting a few non-respondents and determining whether their responses were markedly different from the respondents. Given that no contact details of recipients of the questionnaire were available, this method was not able to be used to determine non-response bias in the present study. However, a phone call to the researcher six days after the survey was mailed, was recorded in a diary kept over the research period. The caller began with the statement "I don't really think I can fill out your questionnaire" and

went on to say she believed her 'totally negative' experience was sure to corrupt the research findings. The caller described herself as a "disillusioned 'old school' early childhood teacher" and talked for approximately twenty minutes venting her frustration that she was a "lone voice getting nowhere". The caller was encouraged to complete the questionnaire and reassured that her response would be highly valuable to the research. However, upon perusal of the qualitative section of the returned questionnaires it seemed this teacher did not, in the end, return the questionnaire. Similarly, one other case came to light with a note included at the end of one questionnaire (146) that indicated the respondent's colleague chose not to complete a questionnaire, believing her negative perceptions and experience would 'bias results'.

One cannot ascertain from two cases alone that non-respondents were more likely to be experiencing difficulty in exercising their leadership skills, or indeed to confirm Rosnow and Rosenthal's (1996) findings that the non-respondents were more likely to be less sociable than respondents. However, these two known cases of non-response serve to highlight questions concerning the impact that data from non-respondents would have had on the overall results of the questionnaire. Given the issue of non-response could not be resolved in the present study, findings can only be held true for the group of early childhood teachers who completed the questionnaire.

### **Biographical data**

The first task in the analysis of the biographical data from section A of the questionnaire was to assign numbers in order to code the responses in this section. For the ten questions, the codes ranged from a single number representing the number of years teaching experience to nine codes that were assigned to identify the type of teaching qualification held by respondents. Table 6.1 provides a summary of teachers' backgrounds and biographical data.



Table 6.1

Summary of biographical information provided by teachers

		Number of Teachers	Percentage
<b>Gender of teachers</b>	Female	269	99%
	Male	3	1%
<b>Years teaching experience</b>	0-2 years	24	9%
	3-5 years	35	13%
	6-15 years	126	46%
	16 or more years	87	32%
<b>Teaching location</b>	Metropolitan	214	79%
	Country	54	20%
	Unspecified	4	1%
<b>Site of preprimary centre</b>	On site (with primary school)	241	89%
	Off site	31	11%
<b>Number of P/K teachers in school</b>	1 teacher	43	16%
	2-4 teachers	199	73%
	5 or more teachers	30	11%
<b>Gender of principal</b>	Female	48	18%
	Male	224	82%
<b>Member of professional organization</b>	Yes	68	25%
	No	204	75%
<b>Teaching qualification</b>	3 year diploma ECE	91	33%
	4 year degree ECE	58	21%
	Graduate diploma ECE	14	5%
	3 year diploma primary	15	6%
	4 year degree primary	16	6%
	3 year diploma (unspecified)	33	12%
	4 year degree (unspecified)	39	14%
	Masters degree (completed or in progress)	4	1%
	2 year Child Care diploma	1	
	Unspecified	1	

For the 272 respondents, the number of years of teaching experience in early childhood education ranged from a few months to 39 years with a mean of 12.5 years (median 11 years). Whilst there is a relatively broad range of teaching experience covered in the sample, it is weighted with more experienced teachers. Twenty two percent of teachers had less than six years experience teaching whilst the majority (78 percent) had six or more years of experience teaching in early childhood education. It may be the case that confidence of teachers in articulating and communicating their philosophy increases with their teaching experience and hence the results of this study may be biased in this regard. However, as discussed in the career path of teachers and intrapersonal factors in Chapter Two, it cannot be assumed that all experienced teachers will be more confident or more able to exercise leadership than their less experienced colleagues.

As anticipated, and reflecting school reform in Western Australia, the majority of preprimary centres or classrooms (241 or 89 percent) were on-site (situated on the same site as the primary school). The remaining 31 (11 percent) preprimaries were located off-site (blocks or streets away from the primary school). However, the teachers in these off-site centres were still under the direction of their local primary school principal, albeit to varying degrees. It is not believed that being off-site contributed to any great differences in interactions between the early childhood teacher and principal. Although some teachers in off-site centres cited the physical distance as a constraint to communicating with others in the primary school, so too did some teachers whose centres or classrooms were located on-site with the primary school. For example, a comment from a teacher off-site and one from a teacher on-site follows.

Off site location makes communication difficult. I have to make a point of dropping in to school and attending staff meetings in my own time (191:b.1).

[The principal has] no contact with self or class. Only time [I] am addressed is when there is a problem /concern (267:b.1).

Also anticipated was the greater proportion of the principals of early childhood teachers in this study being male. There were 224 (82 percent) male principals and 48 (17 percent) female principals. Of these 48 female principals, at least three were in an acting position. Although teaching in the early years is largely

a female dominated profession, these figures reflect the view proposed in Chapter Two that early childhood teachers are most likely to be teaching under the direction of male principals. Included in this view is the concern that some of these male principals may have retained a patriarchal view of, and have little understanding of, early childhood education. This does not exclude the fact that some female principals too may have little understanding of early childhood philosophy given their primary-oriented teaching background. Teachers' comments and concerns with respect to this issue are discussed further in Chapter Nine.

As early childhood teachers are most often in the minority of school staff, it is pertinent to note the number of preprimary or kindergarten colleagues on the respondent's school staff. The mean number of preprimary or kindergarten teachers at respondent's schools was 2.8 (mode 2, median 3). Of the 272 teachers, 42 (16 percent) reported to be the only preprimary teacher on the school staff. As such, these teachers would not have the support that other respondents reported they experienced when there were two or more preprimary teachers within the school. However, it cannot always be assumed that lone preprimary teachers on school staff experience greater difficulties than those with other preprimary colleagues on staff in communicating their philosophy to others in the school. As a few respondents pointed out, difficulties can arise in the preprimary cluster of teachers when one or more teachers have programs that adopt some practices that are more akin to formalised primary learning than early childhood philosophy. In such a situation, a teacher espousing appropriate early childhood pedagogy may experience difficulty in communicating or justifying their philosophy to others when faced with lack of support or conflicting views from their early childhood colleagues in the school. This difficulty is reflected in the comment from one respondent:

The other [preprimary] teacher is always asked points of view even though she is primary trained. She has worked in the school for ten years...I do get tired of being the only early childhood trained person, youngest and having the least years of experience. I still have a point of view and I do state it whenever possible (42:d).

The issue of primary or secondary trained staff teaching in the area of early childhood education was raised by several respondents at various points within the qualitative section of the questionnaire. It was argued by some that teachers from a primary or secondary teacher training background did not provide programs that

reflected appropriate early childhood pedagogy, despite their assertions to the contrary. For example, one respondent wrote at length:

In the last few years I have become increasingly concerned about...the demise of the ECE scene. In particular, I am concerned about the encroachment of non-ECE trained teachers into preprimaries and MAG classes that purport to meet the needs of all the children but do not. The Education Department claims to support developmental learning but in these classes I see activities becoming more and more formal with more and more worksheets....I am also concerned for the students who are working so hard to specialise in ECE and yet, out in the real world principals are free to appoint any teacher into their preprimary – what hope for the new teacher? I even know of one case where a primary teacher was appointed to a preprimary position and in less than two terms was asked to 'train' another primary teacher during a six week conversion course...I often wonder what value is put on the ECE way of teaching ...or for that matter, the ECE teacher (82;d)

Examination of the reported teaching qualifications of respondents revealed at least 149 (55 percent) teachers had three or four years in early childhood training and 31 (11 percent) teachers were three or four year primary trained. However, it is acknowledged that a proportion of the 72 (26 percent) teachers who did not specify the area of their training may also be from a primary or secondary background. Similarly, apart from three respondents who reported to have teacher training at the secondary level, it is not known the backgrounds of many of the 14 teachers with a Graduate Diploma in early childhood studies. Despite there being a minority of teachers with a primary or secondary teaching background working in preprimaries or kindergartens, the issue of conflicting philosophies has been highlighted by respondents and discussed in more detail in Phase Two of the study.

It is interesting to note the relatively low proportion of teachers in the study who reported to be a member of a professional organisation related to early childhood education. Of the 272 respondents, only 68 (25 percent) reported they belonged to a professional body. Affiliation with an early childhood professional organisation has been identified as an ethical requirement of early childhood practitioners (Freeman & Brown, 2000; Sebastian-Nickell & Milne, 1992; Stonehouse, 1998). It is also one way to keep abreast of the latest research and developments, and indeed, to form a collective voice in order to advocate for young children and appropriate programs. However, it appears that the majority of teachers

in this study were not motivated to join an early childhood professional body. This finding is consistent with Rodd's (1996) finding that less than ten percent of respondents from a number of studies of child care coordinators were members of a professional association.

## **Summary**

This chapter has addressed the issue of bias in the questionnaire data and has provided further detail on the background and biographical details of respondents in this study. Nearly all respondents are female with teaching experience ranging from a few months to 39 years. Most have completed three or four years of teacher training in early childhood education. The majority of teaching positions of respondents were located in on-site preprimary centres in metropolitan primary schools with predominantly male principals.

The following chapter describes the process of data analysis for Section B of the questionnaire, the model of Early Childhood Teacher Leadership. In this chapter, the results are presented, together with a description of the meaning of the Teacher Leadership scale.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **DATA ANALYSIS (PHASE ONE SECTION B): CREATING A SCALE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHER LEADERSHIP**

This chapter begins with a description of the process of data analysis for the model of Early Childhood Teacher Leadership using the Rasch Unidimensional Measurement Model (RUMM 2010) program (Andrich, Sheridan, Lyne, & Luo, 2000). Following this, the results are presented through tables, figures and descriptive text. The general meaning of the Early Childhood Teacher Leadership Scale is explained and pertinent aspects discussed. Then the implications of the findings are discussed.

#### **Data analysis with the RUMM 2010 program**

Responses for Section B of the questionnaire were entered into an Excel file in terms of the response category codes (one, two, three and four), with the number nine representing missing data. The data were then analysed using the Rasch Unidimensional Measurement Model (RUMM 2010) program (Andrich, Sheridan, Lyne & Luo, 2000). Initial analysis by the RUMM program tested the 142 items (71 stem items) as a group to see if they formed a single valid scale for the predominant trait of Teacher Leadership. At the outset, the program discarded two teachers' responses due to corrupted data, thus leaving the data of 270 teachers for subsequent analysis. During the initial analysis, a problem emerged with answers in categories two and three (*some* and *most of the time*), whereby teachers did not answer in a consistent manner. As inconsistencies were not evident with answers in either categories one and four, a decision was made to combine categories two and three, leaving three categories instead of the initial four, for subsequent analysis.

A number of steps were taken in order to create a proper scale of Teacher Leadership. To begin with, the item thresholds were checked so that only those items with ordered thresholds (indicating that the response categories for the item were answered consistently and logically) were included in the final analysis. Next,

the residuals were examined, the residual being the difference between the expected item 'difficulty' calculated according to the model and the actual 'difficulty' as agreed on by teachers. The chi-square of items were then checked to identify items that fitted the model. The chi-square represents the item-trait test of fit which examines the consistency of the item parameters across the teacher leadership measures for each item. Next, the person-item trait fit was investigated to determine whether there was agreement among teachers along the scale as to the 'difficulties' of all the items along the scale. The non-performing items (50 items out of 142, determined through the steps above) were deleted from the scale thus creating a proper scale with only items that fitted the model. Finally, the person measures (Teacher Leadership scores) and item 'difficulties' were calibrated on the same scale by the RUMM 2010 program, thus providing the final analysis of the Model of Early Childhood Teacher Leadership.

## **Results**

The results of the analysis are set out in Tables 7.1 and 7.2, Figure 4 and Appendices B and C. Table 2 presents a summary of the psychometric characteristics of the Early Childhood Teacher Leadership Scale and the statistics for fit to the model. Table 7.2 shows the mean Teacher Leadership scores for each sub-scale in both the real and ideal aspects. Figure 4 is a graph of the item threshold difficulties aligned on the scale from 'easy' to 'hard' with the Teacher Leadership scores calibrated on the same scale from low to high. Appendix B displays the items that form the Early Childhood Teacher Leadership Scale and their estimated 'difficulty' values, while Appendix C shows the threshold values of the categories for each item.

### **Psychometric characteristics of the Teacher Leadership Scale**

Of the 142 original items that formed the Early Childhood Teacher Leadership Scale, 50 did not fit the measurement model in either the real or ideal aspect (see Appendix B). For the items that did fit the model, 38 items measured a real (How I Am) aspect of Teacher Leadership and 54 items measured an ideal (How I Would Like To Be) aspect of Teacher Leadership. Thus the ideal (How I Would Like To Be) aspect made a stronger contribution to the scale than the real (How I

Am) aspect of Teacher Leadership. Sixty of the 92 items had a corresponding real and ideal aspect that fitted the model. That is, for 30 stem-items, there were 30 real and 30 corresponding ideal aspects for that item. The remaining 62 items were comprised of eight real and 54 ideal aspects of the items. Together, these 92 items fitted the measurement model and formed a valid and reliable interval-level scale.

Table 7.1

Summary statistics for 92 item Teacher Leadership scale

	Items	Teachers
Number	92	270
Location mean	0.000	2.798
Standard deviation	1.761	1.137
Fit statistic mean	-0.249	-0.515
Standard deviation	0.905	1.430
Item-trait interaction chi square = 295.816		
Probability of item-trait (p) = 0.01		
Degrees of freedom = 276		
Teacher Separation Index = 0.94		
Power of tests-of-fit: excellent		

Notes on Table 7.1.

1. The item means are constrained to zero by the model.
2. When the data fit the model, the fit statistic approximates a distribution with a mean near zero and a SD near one (a good fit for this scale).
3. The item-trait interaction indicates the agreement displayed with all items across all teachers from different locations on the scale (acceptable for this scale).
4. The Teacher Separation Index is the proportion of observed teacher leadership variance considered true (in this scale, 94% and very high).

The RUMM 2010 program rates the overall power of tests-of-fit in the categories of too low, low, reasonable, good, and excellent. The 92 item scale of Early Childhood Teacher Leadership was rated as 'excellent' which indicates a



strong consensus amongst teachers of the location of the items, ordered along the scale from 'easy' to 'hard'. In addition, category threshold values are ordered from low to high which indicates that teachers answered the response categories consistently and logically. Thresholds are the estimated boundaries between two adjacent response categories for each item where the odds are 1:1 of answering in either of the adjacent categories. As the response categories increase from none, to some /most, to all of the time, teachers need correspondingly higher leadership scores in order to provide a positive response. The Index of Separability (akin to traditional reliability in Classical Test Theory) for the 92 item scale with the three response categories is 0.94. Therefore, the proportion of observed variance considered true is 94 percent.

### **Fit of items to the model**

In determining the fit of items to the model, the RUMM 2010 program estimates two statistics. One is the item-trait test-of-fit (chi-square) which examines the consistency of the item parameters over the range of Teacher Leadership scores and an overall test-of-fit. Results indicate that there is general agreement on the location of the item 'difficulties' by teachers with Teacher Leadership scores located along the same scale (see Table 7.1). In other words, there is agreement for the location or 'difficulties' of all items on the scale across teachers with different Teacher Leadership scores. The other statistic provided by the RUMM 2010 program is the item-teacher interaction test-of-fit which examines the consistency of response patterns for teachers across all items and for items across all teachers. The item-teacher test-of-fit indicates there is good consistency of teacher and item response patterns (see Table 7.1). The locations ('difficulties') of the items are reasonably well targeted against the teachers comprising a range of items from 'easy' to 'hard' which almost cover the range of teacher leadership scores from 'low' to 'high' (see Figure 4). The thresholds of the items range from approximately -5.0 to +6.4 logits and cover the range of teacher leadership measures on the scale which range from approximately 0.0 to +6.0 logits (see Appendix C for the threshold values of the categories for each item). The majority of teachers (169 or 63 percent) have teacher leadership measures in the 'medium' range from 2.00 to 3.96 logits. Sixty teachers (22 percent) had teacher leadership measures in the 'low' range from 0.03 to

1.95 logits, and 41 teachers (15 percent) had 'high' teacher leadership measures from 4.05 to 6.04 logits.

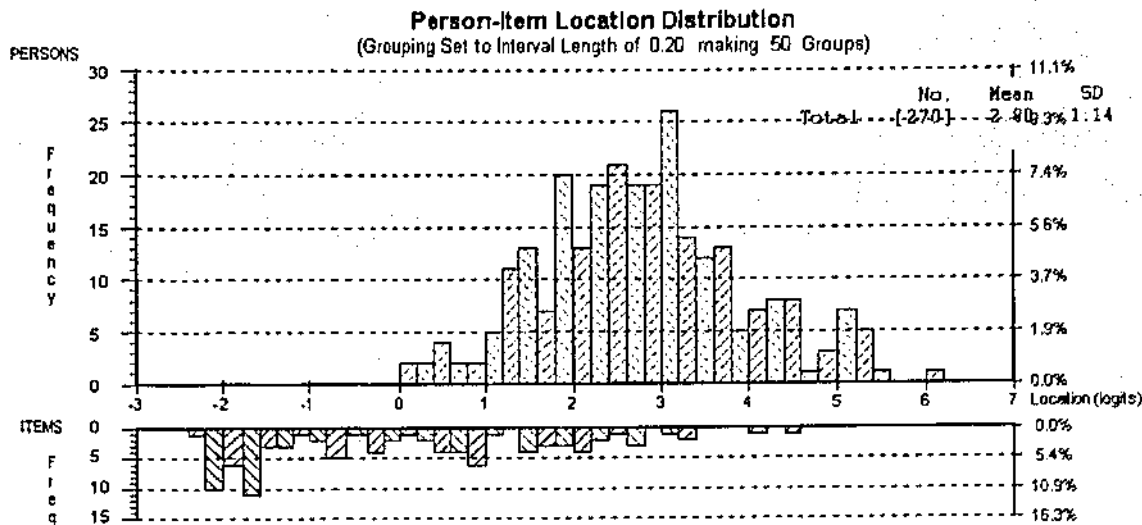


Figure 4: Teacher Leadership scores and item locations on the same scale.

Notes on Figure 4

1. The scale is in logits, the log odds of answering the response categories.
2. Teacher measures (low to high) are placed on the upper side of the scale and item locations ('easy' to 'hard') are placed on the lower side of the scale.

The spread of items indicates there are too many 'easy' items with no Teacher Leadership measures low enough to match several 'easy' items. Some of these very 'easy' items could be discarded in a future version of the scale. At the other end of the scale, there are too few 'hard' items to match the highest Teacher Leadership scores but the highest response categories for these 'hard' items, with their high threshold values, 'cover' the high measures of Teacher Leadership (see Appendix C). The data presented in the results indicate that a good unidimensional scale of Early Childhood Teacher Leadership has been constructed. For this scale the errors are small, the internal reliability is very high and the power of the tests-of-fit are excellent.

In addition to fitting the measurement model, the items that form the scale reflect aspects of the conceptual model. Specifically, it was conceptualised from the outset, and subsequently realised in the results that, for most items, teachers found it 'easier' to have higher ideal (How I Would Like To Be) self-views of leadership than

real (How I Am) self-views of leadership. The mean item 'difficulty' for each sub-scale of Early Childhood Teacher Leadership is presented in Table 7.2. As conceptualised, the ideal aspects of Teacher Leadership are generally easier than the real aspects. There is one exception with the sub-scale of self-leadership where teachers found it comparatively 'easy' to have high self-views of leadership in the real mode as against the generally 'easier' ideal modes across sub-scales.

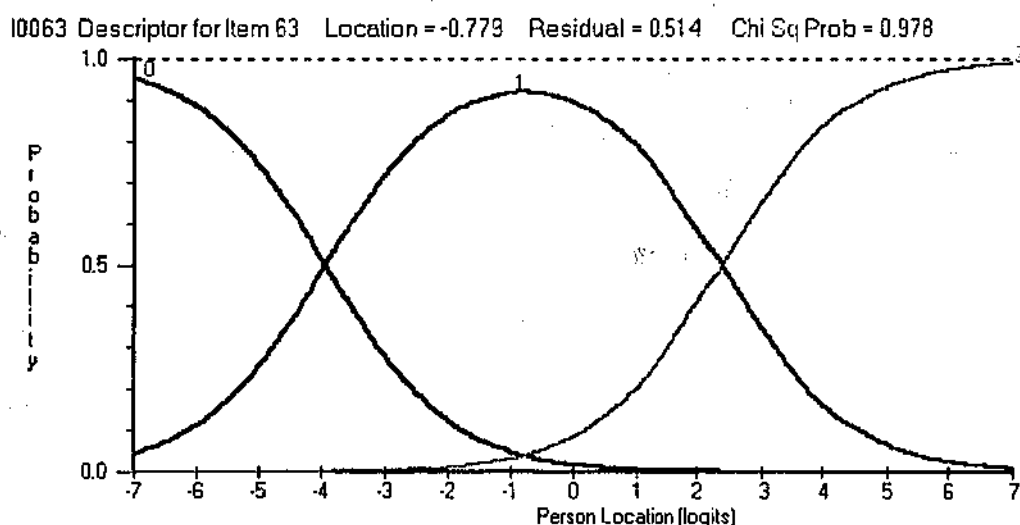
The item 'difficulties' and the Teacher Leadership scores are calibrated on the same scale so that equal differences on the scale between measures of teacher leadership represent equal differences in item 'difficulty'. As mentioned previously, there is no true zero point as there is no item that represents zero Teacher Leadership. The 92 items are aligned on the scale in order of 'difficulty' from 'easy' to 'hard' (see Appendix C). Nearly all the teachers answered the easier items positively (for example, items 25, 15, 110, 33, 63, 14, 42, 126, 30). As the items become increasingly 'difficult' on the scale, respondents need a higher Teacher Leadership score to answer them positively. This means the more 'difficult' items are only answered positively by teachers who have high leadership scores (for example, items 115, 117, 73, 1113, 37, 103, 109, 141). Teachers with low leadership scores do not answer the more 'difficult' items positively.

### **Non-fit of items to the model**

One reason for the non-fit of some items to the measurement model is that teachers may not have answered the response categories consistently and logically, resulting in disordered thresholds. Items that fit the model have ordered thresholds that correspond to the ordered response categories. An example of where teachers did not answer the response categories consistently and logically is item 93-94 *I feel more comfortable talking to persons my sex than persons of the opposite sex*. It is likely the wording of the item led to some confusion in answering according to the response categories. Another reason for the non-fit of some items may have been the lack of consensus among teachers on the location of the item on the scale. For example, some teachers with high leadership scores may find an item 'easy' while others with similar leadership scores may find the same item 'difficult'. Any disagreement about the item 'difficulty' shows up as an inconsistent response pattern.

## Ordered thresholds and response categories

As explained previously, in order to determine threshold values, the RUMM 2010 program estimates the boundaries between two adjacent response categories for each item where there is an equal probability of answering in either of the adjacent categories. For an item to fit the model, the thresholds need to be ordered in line with the response categories. This means in effect that teachers with low leadership scores would most likely be able to respond positively to an 'easy' item, but teachers would need progressively higher leadership scores in order to respond positively to the 'harder' items. If the progression of Teacher Leadership scores from 'low' to 'high' corresponds with the item 'difficulties' from 'easy' to 'hard', then the item thresholds will be in an ordered sequence. The RUMM 2010 program provides a Category Probability Curve for each item which makes it possible to view the extent to which the ordered thresholds are distributed evenly. A perusal of the category curves for the 92 items indicates that the teachers answered the response categories consistently and logically, resulting in ordered thresholds. For example, in Figure 5 the category curve is shown for the best fitting item 63, *I look for ways to improve my teaching practice* (real mode).



**Figure 5:** Item Category Curve for Item 63 (good-fitting item)

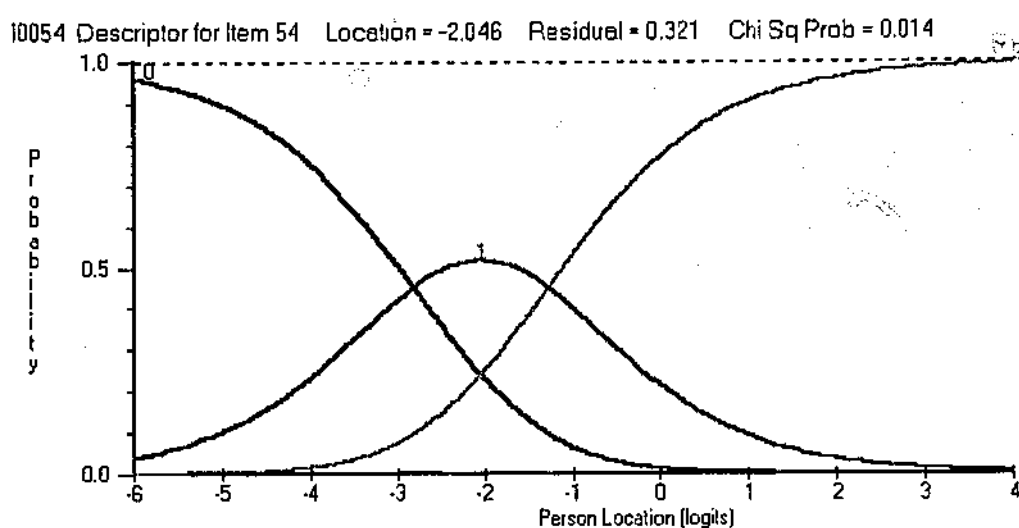
### Note

1. Threshold 1 is about -4.0 logits
2. Threshold 2 is about +2.4 logits

Item 63 is one of the 'easiest' items with a Chi Square Probability of 0.978 which indicates an excellent fit to the model. Its 'difficulty' is -0.78 which indicates teachers found it relatively 'easy' to say *I look for ways to improve my teaching practice*. Figure 5 shows that the Category 0 curve indicates that a person with a Teacher Leadership score of -7.0 logits (Person Location) has around 0.95 probability of answering in this category (*none of the time*). However if the Teacher Leadership score was around +0.5 logits, the probability of answering in this category reduces to near 0. Looking at the Category 1 curve, with a Teacher Leadership score of -7.0 the probability of answering in this category (*some/most of the time*) is around 0.05, while a Teacher Leadership score of around -1.0 corresponds with a probability near 0.9. In the Category 2 curve, a Teacher Leadership score of -2.0 corresponds with a probability near 0 for answering in this category (*all of the time*), while a Teacher Leadership score of around +6.0 corresponds with a probability of around 1.0. Examination of the Category Curve for item 63 illustrates that thresholds for this item are ordered (-4.0 to 2.4 logits) and that, as expected, increasingly higher measures of Teacher Leadership are required in order to respond to this item in the higher categories. That is, in order to respond positively to the item *I look for ways to improve my teaching practice* in the category of *all the time*, teachers need to have higher Teacher Leadership scores than to respond positively in the categories *none or almost none of the time*, and *some or most of the time*.

Of the 92 items that fitted the model, the worst fitting was item 54 - *I implement a developmentally appropriate program* (ideal mode), shown in Figure 6. Item 54 is an 'extremely easy' item on the scale with a location of -2.05 and a Chi Square Probability of 0.014 indicating a poor fit to the model. For this item, the probability of teachers with low leadership scores responding in the higher categories is increased. Examining the Probability Category Curve for item 54 (see Figure 6) reveals that for a Teacher Leadership score of around -6.0, there is a probability of 0.95 of answering in the 0 category (*none of the time*), while a Teacher Leadership score of around 0 corresponds with the probability of 0. The Category 1 curve indicates that for a person with a Teacher Leadership score of around -6.0 there is a probability of around 0.05 they would respond in this category, while a Teacher Leadership score of around -2.0 carries the probability of around 0.5 to respond in

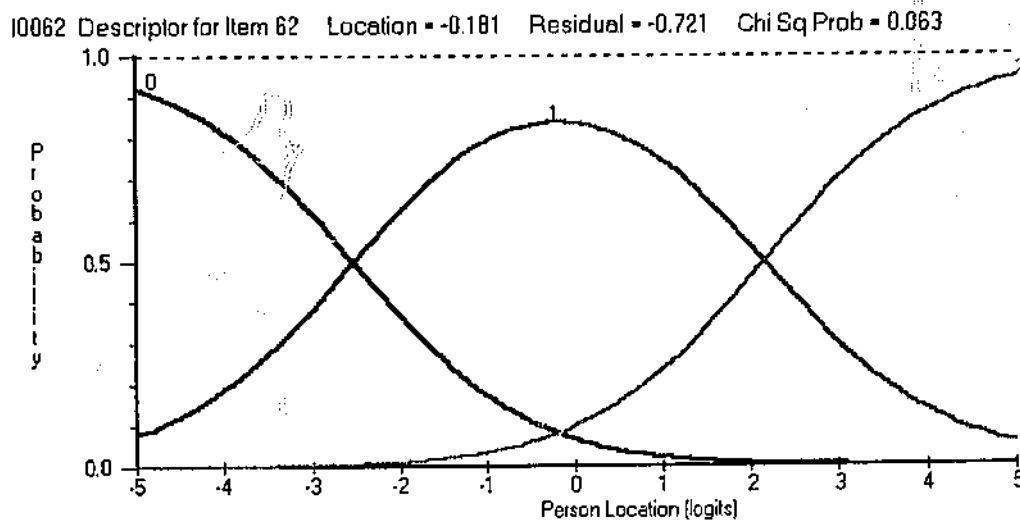
this category. The Category 2 curve indicates that for a Teacher Leadership score of around  $-4.0$  there is a probability of 0 responding in this category (*all the time*), while for a Teacher Leadership score of around  $+2.0$  there is a probability of around 0.95 responding in this category. Although thresholds are ordered for this item with teachers needing increasingly higher Teacher Leadership scores to respond more frequently in the higher category, it is evident through the relatively low peak of the category one curve that some teachers had not responded as expected. With a Teacher Leadership score of around  $-2.0$  there is only a difference of about 0.25 probability of teachers answering in either category zero, one or two.



**Figure 6:** Item Category Curve for Item 54 (not-so-good fitting item)

The eighth worst fitting item was item 62, *I am willing to be involved in extra curricula activities* (ideal mode), shown in Figure 7. Item 62 is an example of an 'easy' item with a Chi Square Probability of 0.063 which indicates a poor fit to the model and a location of  $-0.18$  which indicates teachers found it 'easy' to say *they would like to be willing to be involved in extra curricula activities*. Examination of the Category Curve for item 62 illustrates that thresholds for this item are ordered and that, as expected, increasingly higher measures of Teacher Leadership are required in order to respond to this item in the higher categories. That is, even though item 62 is an 'easy' item, in order to respond to the item *I am willing to be*

involved in (How I would like to be) in the category of *all the time*, teachers need to have higher Teacher Leadership scores.



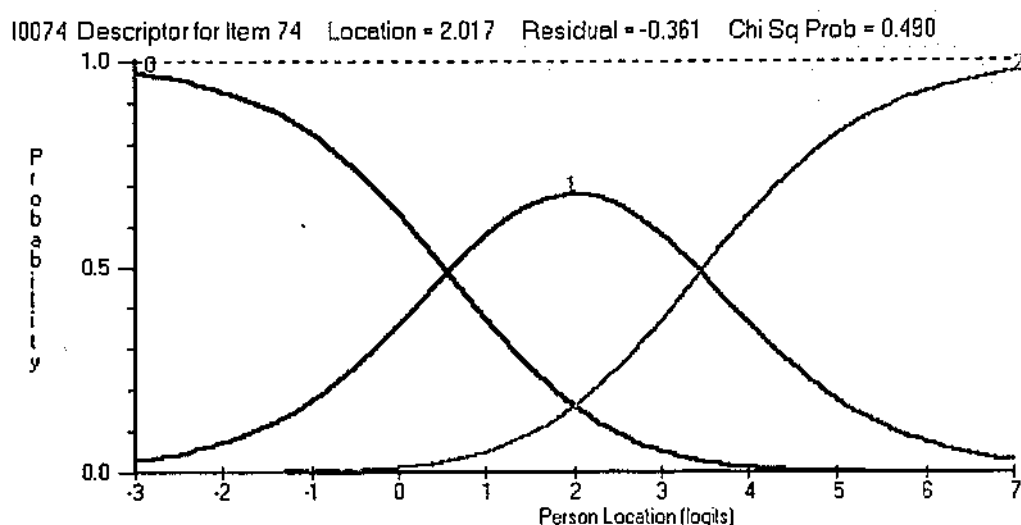
**Figure 7:** Item Category Curve for Item 62 (not-so-good fitting item)

Figure 7 shows that the Category 0 curve indicates that a person with a Teacher Leadership score of  $-5.0$  logits has around 0.9 probability of answering in this category. If the Teacher Leadership score was around 1.5 logits, the probability of answering in this category is near 0. Looking at the Category 1 curve, with a Teacher Leadership score of  $-5.0$  the probability of answering in this category is around 0.1, while a Teacher Leadership score of 0 corresponds with a probability of 0.8. In the Category 2 curve, a Teacher Leadership score of around  $-2.0$  corresponds with a probability of 0 for answering in this category, while a Teacher Leadership score of around  $+5.0$  corresponds with a probability of around 0.95.

Examining the wording of items may indicate, in some instances, possible reasons for disordered thresholds or uneven distribution of responses. In the case of item 62 for example, the nature of its content provides a possible reason for teachers responding contrary to the model. It is possible that many teachers are willing to be involved in extra curricular activities, maybe in part through it being an expectation within the school. However, in the ideal mode, some teachers who have a high Teacher Leadership score may wish they did not need to be so involved in extra curricula activities at school. They may believe that ideally, they should be spending

more time with their family or meeting other commitments outside school. For this reason, they may respond in a lower category of *some of the time* rather than the expected *all of the time*. Similarly, the reverse may be true for some teachers with low Teacher Leadership scores who may have fewer commitments, and ideally, would like to be involved in extra curricular activities at school *all of the time*.

An example of an item that has a 'medium' fit to the model is illustrated in Figure 8 of Item 74 *I take a leadership role in the wider education community* (ideal mode).



**Figure 8:** Item Category Curve for Item 74 (reasonable-fitting item)

Item 74 is among the 'hardest' items on the scale with a location of +2.02. Examining the Probability Category Curve for item 74 reveals that for a Teacher Leadership score of around -3.0, there is a probability of 0.98 of answering in the 0 category, while a Teacher Leadership score of around +4.0 corresponds with the probability of 0. The Category 1 curve indicates that for a person with a Teacher Leadership score of around -3.0 there is a probability of around 0 they would respond in this category, while a Teacher Leadership score of around +2.0 carries the probability of around 0.7 to respond in this category. The Category 2 curve indicates that for a Teacher Leadership score of around 0 there is a probability of 0 responding in this category, while for a Teacher Leadership score of around +6.0 there is a probability of around 0.9 responding in this category.



The thresholds are ordered for this item with teachers needing increasingly higher Teacher Leadership scores to respond positively in the higher category. The category curves are also distributed evenly indicating teachers generally responded as expected. However, for perfectly distributed curves, the model would expect that for a teacher leadership score of around +2.0 the probability would be higher than 0.7 to answer in category one. An example of teachers not answering as expected can be illustrated by looking at the Teacher Leadership score and responses of one person. The teacher with person identity 140 has a Teacher Leadership score of +5.337 which is the third highest of the sample. Looking at the category curve for item 74 indicates that for a Teacher Leadership score this high, the probability of answering in category 0 is 0, while the probability of answering in category 1 is around 0.1. However, for a Teacher Leadership score of +5.34, the probability of answering in category 2 rises to around 0.9. This means that person 140 would be expected to answer in category 2 for item 74. That is, person 140 would be expected to respond that *they would like to take a leadership role in the wider community, all the time, or nearly all the time*. However, examination of the response of teacher 140 to item 74 reveals a response in category 0. That is, this teacher with a high leadership score would ideally like to take a leadership role in the wider community *none, or almost none of the time*.

While the Rasch measurement model would expect a teacher with such a leadership score to answer in the category 2, other factors may influence a teacher's perception of leadership roles. For example, a teacher with a high leadership score may answer in the correspondingly high categories for most of the other items but would ideally not want to be involved in leadership in the wider community, believing this role would take time and commitment away from his or her own family or other interests. Indeed, person 108 proffered justification for wanting reduced leadership responsibilities in section C of the questionnaire with the statement:

This year I have been in a position of wanting less responsibility as a leader...Things can become an avalanche of extra responsibilities that actually take one's focus and energy away from the children (108:d).

## General meaning of Teacher Leadership

The single predominant variable of Teacher Leadership for early childhood educators has been conceptualised from a multi-aspect model comprising 92 items (38 real and 54 ideal mode) that have been deemed to fit the model, using the RUMM 2010 program. These 92 items are grouped in sub-scales or second order aspects within three first order aspects of teacher leadership, namely General Leadership, Communication and Influence (refer Figure 2). These three first order aspects are comprised of four, two and two sub-scales (second order aspects) respectively, which in turn are comprised of between eight and seventeen items that fit the measurement model (see Appendix B). The mean 'difficulties' of items that fit the model for each sub-scale are shown in Table 7.2 and ordered from 'easiest' to 'hardest'. A more detailed explanation of the sub-scales follows.

Table 7.2

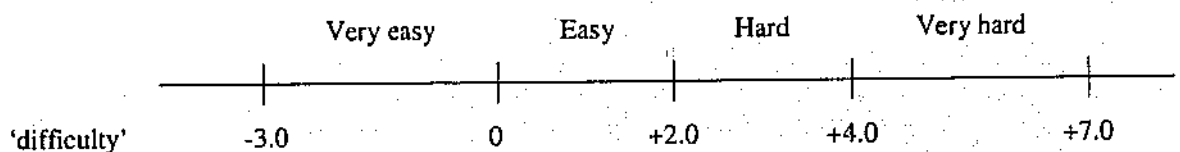
Mean item 'difficulty' by sub-scale from 'easiest' to 'hardest'.

Teacher Leadership Sub-scale	Mean score (Ideal /Real mode)		
Program Leadership	-1.882	Ideal mode	('easiest')
Self-Leadership	-1.663	Ideal mode	
Communication from me	-1.493	Ideal mode	
Classroom Leadership	-1.368	Ideal mode	
School Leadership	-1.190	Ideal mode	
My influence on the School	-0.492	Ideal mode	
Self-Leadership	-0.027	<b>Real mode</b>	
Communications to me	+0.172	Ideal mode	
My Influence on the Principal	+0.643	Ideal mode	
Program Leadership	+0.918	<b>Real mode</b>	
Communications from me	+1.004	<b>Real mode</b>	
School Leadership	+1.024	<b>Real mode</b>	
Classroom Leadership	+1.216	<b>Real mode</b>	
My Influence on the School	+1.756	<b>Real mode</b>	
My Influence on the Principal	+2.347	<b>Real mode</b>	
Communications to me	+3.061	<b>Real mode</b>	('hardest')

## Notes on Table 7.2.

1. The scores are the mean of the item 'difficulties' in logits for the items that fit the model and belong to the sub-group indicated.
2. Negative values indicate the means are low on the scale (or 'easier'). Positive values indicate that the means are high on the scale (or 'harder').
3. According to individual item values (see Appendix B), each ideal sub-scale mean is 'easier' than its corresponding real sub-scale mean, and except for one case, the ideal sub-scale means are 'easier' than the real sub-scale means.

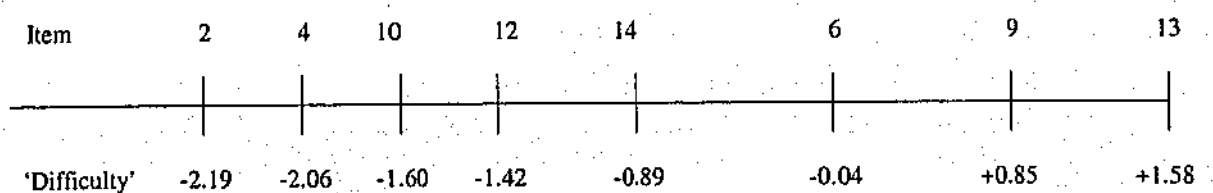
For the purpose of describing the scale and interpreting general meaning, an arbitrary scale was determined with cut off points relating to corresponding descriptive terms from 'very easy' to 'very hard'. More specifically, the descriptors and cut off points are detailed in Figure 9.



**Figure 9:** Arbitrary boundaries for descriptive terms.

## General Leadership

The first aspect of Teacher Leadership, *General Leadership*, has four sub-scales. The first of these sub-scales is Classroom Leadership which has eight items (2 real and 6 ideal) that fit the model. The 'difficulties' of these eight items range from -2.190 to + 1.581 logits (see Appendix B). Figure 10 below plots the eight items from the Classroom Leadership sub-scale on a continuum showing the item 'difficulty' or order of items from 'easy' to 'hard'.



**Figure 10:** Item 'difficulties' for sub-scale Classroom Leadership.

Figure 10 shows the 'difficulties' for items 2, 4, 10, 12, 14, 6, 9 and 13, the items from the sub-scale of Classroom Leadership that fitted the measurement model. It can be seen from the order of 'difficulty' that in general, teachers found items 2 and 4 'very easy', with items 10, 12, 6 and 9 becoming progressively 'harder' and item 13 being the 'hardest' of the eight items for teachers to answer positively. Using the cut off points displayed in Figure 9, the difficulty of the items can be described in the following terms. Items 2, 4, 6, 10, 12 and 14 are 'very easy' and items 9 and 13 are 'easy'. Correspondingly, as the items become 'harder', teachers need a higher score of Teacher Leadership in order to answer the items positively.

Looking at more detailed meaning within the sub-scale, in a real (*How I am*) self-view of Classroom Leadership, teachers found it 'easy' to say that they convey clear role responsibilities to other staff (item 9). They found it 'harder' but still 'easy' to say that they take a leadership role (item 13). In an ideal (*How I would like to be*) self-view of Classroom Leadership, teachers found it 'very easy' to say that they would like to handle a classroom crisis well (item 2); set clear standards (item 4); and to say that they would like to convey clear role responsibilities to other staff (item 10). They also found it 'very easy' to say they would like to motivate and inspire staff to do their best (item 12); be willing to take calculated risks (item 6); and to take a leadership role (item 14). As conceptualised from the outset, each of these ideal items is 'easier' than the corresponding real items.

The second sub-scale of Self-Leadership has 11 items (4 real and 7 ideal) that fit the model. The 'difficulties' of these items range from  $-1.83$  to  $+0.49$  logits. In a *How I am* real view of Self-Leadership, teachers found it 'very easy' to say that they set clear goals and that they achieve what they set out to achieve. They found it 'easy' to say they are proactive rather than reactive (initiating rather than responding), and 'easy' to say they were an optimistic person. In a *How I would like to be* ideal self-view, teachers found it 'very easy' to say that they would like to stand up for what they believe in; achieve what they set out to achieve; know their own strengths and weaknesses; and to be a confident, assertive, and optimistic person. Each of these ideal items is 'easier' than the real items.

The third sub-scale Program Leadership has 13 items (4 real and 9 ideal) that fit the model. The 'difficulties' of these items range from  $-2.29$  to  $+1.84$  logits. In

a real self-view of Program Leadership, teachers found it 'very easy' to say they are proud of their achievements at school; 'easy' to say they are sure of themselves at school; and 'easy' to say they feel involved in school life and that they are satisfied with their record keeping. In an ideal self-view, teachers found it 'very easy' to say they would like to feel good about the work they do at school and to be viewed as an equal by colleagues of their own sex. They found it 'very easy' to say they would like to be proud of their achievements at school, to feel involved in school life, and to be satisfied with their record keeping. They also found it 'very easy' to say they would like to have good rapport with the early childhood and other staff, to be sure of themselves at school, and to be viewed as an equal by colleagues of the opposite sex. Each of these ideal items is 'easier' than the real items.

The fourth sub-scale School Leadership has 12 items (3 real and 9 ideal) that fit the model. The 'difficulties' of these items range from  $-2.19$  to  $+3.36$  logits. In a real self-view of School Leadership, teachers found it 'hard' to say that they take a leadership role in the wider community, 'easy' to say they initiate their own professional development, and 'very easy' to say they look for ways to improve their teaching practice. In an ideal self-view, teachers found it 'very easy' to say that they would like to implement a developmentally appropriate program, to reflect on their own teaching practice, and to advocate for early childhood teaching philosophy. They found it 'very easy' to say they would like to initiate their own professional development, look for ways to improve their teaching practice, feel in control of what happens in their classroom, and to keep up to date with the latest developments in early childhood education. Teachers found it 'very easy' to say they would like to be willing to be involved in extra curricula activities, but 'hard' to say they would like to take a leadership role in the wider community. With the exception of teachers finding it 'hard' to say they take a leadership role in the wider community in both the real and ideal mode, each of the ideal items in this sub-scale is 'easier' than the real items.

## **Communications**

The second aspect of Teacher Leadership, *Communication*, has two sub-scales. The first of these sub-scales is From me to parents /teachers /principal which has 17 items (9 real and 8 ideal) that fit the model. The 'difficulties' of these items

range from -2.19 to +2.22 logits. In a real self-view of communication from me, teachers found it 'very easy' to say they are confident to explain to children's parents about the early childhood way of teaching, and 'easy' to say they are confident to explain it to principal and other school staff. Teachers found it 'easy' to say they communicate effectively with the principal, and that they have good communication skills. Teachers also found it 'easy' to say that they could argue their point of view strongly with the principal, children's parents, and other school staff but they found it 'hard' to say they are a confident public speaker about early childhood education. In an ideal self-view of communications from me, teachers found it 'very easy' to say they would like to be a confident public speaker about early childhood education, and to be able to argue their point of view strongly with children's parents and other school staff. They found it 'very easy' to say they would like to be able to communicate effectively with the principal, and 'very easy' to say they would like to have good communication skills, and to be confident to explain about the early childhood way of teaching to children's parents, the principal, and other school staff. Each of the ideal items in this sub-scale is 'easier' than the corresponding real items.

The second sub-scale of Communication, From parents /teachers /principal to me has 13 items (7 real and 6 ideal) that fit the model. The 'difficulties' of these items range from -1.27 to + 4.42 logits. In a real self-view of Communications to me, teachers found it 'easy' to say they are praised for particular projects by children's parents but 'hard' to say that they are praised for particular projects, or given positive feedback for their program by other teachers. Teachers found it 'hard' to say that they are asked questions about their philosophy by children's parents and 'very hard' to say they are asked questions about their philosophy by other teachers and their principal. Teachers found it 'hard' to say that the preprimary staff look to them for leadership. In an ideal self-view of Communication from me, teachers found it 'very easy' to say that they would like to be given positive feedback on their program by children's parents and other teachers, and 'very easy' to say they would like to be praised for particular projects by other teachers. Teachers found it 'easy' to say they would like to be praised for particular projects by the principal, and 'easy' to say they like to be asked questions about their philosophy by their principal and other teachers. For the four stem-items that have a corresponding real and ideal mode, each of the ideal items is 'easier' than the corresponding real items. The

remaining two ideal items are also 'easier' than each of the real items for this sub-scale.

## **Influence**

The third aspect of Teacher Leadership, *Influence*, has two sub-scales. The first of these sub-scales is My influence on the school which has nine items (4 real and 5 ideal). The 'difficulties' of these items range from  $-1.62$  to  $+2.12$  logits. In a real self-view of My Influence on the School, teachers found it 'easy' to say that they push for preprimary staff to share equal status with primary staff in their school, and 'easy' to say they encourage others to do things consistent with their early childhood philosophy. They found it 'hard' to say that they try to change school policy if it conflicted with their philosophy and that they make sure they are included in school decision making. In an ideal self-view, the items were 'easier' than their corresponding real mode. Teachers found it 'very easy' to say they would like to feel comfortable in the school staff room, feel a valued member of school staff and to push for preprimary staff to share equal status with primary staff. Teachers found it 'easy' to say they would like to encourage others to do things consistent with their philosophy, and to try to change school policy if it conflicted with their philosophy.

The second sub-scale of Teacher Leadership, My influence on the Principal, has nine items (5 real and 4 ideal) that fit the model. The 'difficulties' of these items range from  $-1.62$  to  $+3.04$  logits. In a real self-view of My Influence on the Principal, teachers found it 'hard' to say that they encourage the principal to support their early childhood philosophy and 'hard' to say that they tell the principal about their early childhood philosophy, or try to help the principal acquire more knowledge about early childhood education. Teachers found it 'easy' to say they encourage the principal to be involved in what happens in their classroom and that they try to change the principal's attitude if it conflicts with their own. In an ideal mode, teachers found it 'easy' to say they would like to tell the principal of their early childhood philosophy and to try to change their principal's attitude if it conflicted with their own. They found it 'easy' to say they would like to encourage the principal to be involved in what happens in their classroom, and 'easy' to say they would like to try to help the principal acquire more knowledge about early childhood

education. In an ideal self-view of influence on the principal, items were again 'easier' than in the real mode.

## **Summary**

A Rasch measurement model was used to create a Scale of Early Childhood Teacher Leadership comprised of 92 items (38 real and 54 corresponding ideal). Each of the 92 items that fit the model are linked together on a scale along with teacher leadership measures to form a valid and reliable scale based on a multi-aspect model of Early Childhood Teacher Leadership. The teachers in this study found it 'very easy' to say that they would like to have high ideal self-views for most aspects of leadership (General Leadership, Communication and Influence) and 'harder' to say they held high real self-views. Where both the real and corresponding ideal items fitted the model, the ideal items were 'easier' than the real items.

## **Discussion and implications**

The analysis shows that, where both the real and corresponding ideal items fit the model, early childhood teachers found it easier to hold higher ideal views than to hold high real views. This indicates that while early childhood teachers may recognise the importance of leadership skills, indicated by their desire to have higher views in the ideal aspect, they appear to experience difficulty in putting them into practice. This finding of teachers experiencing difficulty is consistent with research discussed in the literature review (Chapter Two) where it was reported that numerous factors can influence or impede teachers' abilities to enact leadership across school settings. An investigation of specific factors that help or hinder early childhood teachers to enact leadership in the form of articulating and communicating their philosophy, is explained in Chapters eight to eleven and in phase two of the study.

It has already been suggested that it is important for early childhood teachers to exercise leadership in the form of articulating and communicating their philosophy to ensure they maintain appropriate practice. Due to educational reforms in Australia, many early childhood teachers are working in school settings where their primary trained colleagues and school administrators have little understanding or experience in early childhood education. In order to enact leadership in this context,



early childhood teachers need to be willing to communicate their philosophy and programming methods both formally and informally to their principal, other teachers and the children's parents. Communicating early childhood philosophy in this context involves being willing to collaborate with others and share ideas, being vocal at staff meetings, and seizing every opportunity to help others understand or learn more about early childhood education. However, the findings of the present study indicate that for most of these aspects of leadership (for example, *I make sure I am included in school decision making; I would try to change school policy if it conflicts with my philosophy; I try to help my principal acquire more knowledge about early childhood education; I am confident to explain to [others] about the early childhood way of teaching*), the teachers reported they find these roles more difficult to enact.

Similarly, the present findings also indicate that teachers find it difficult to take a leadership role outside the classroom and to speak publicly about the early childhood way of teaching. The role of teacher leadership demands going beyond the classroom (Fullan, 1996; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992; Sarason, 1995; Wasley, 1991) and, in the context of the present study, it is important to communicate early childhood philosophy and appropriate programs beyond the classroom so that others may learn more about early childhood education. Teachers reported that they find it 'hard' to say they tell the principal about their early childhood philosophy or that they would try and change the principal's attitude about early childhood education if it conflicted with their own. It may be inferred that if teachers are experiencing difficulties in these areas then they would also find it difficult to advocate for appropriate curriculum and pedagogy in early childhood programs. It seems that supporting frameworks that help teachers develop the leadership skills they need have not accompanied reform in schools.

The findings indicate that in the aspect of self-leadership, teachers found the items to be 'very easy' or 'easy'. In the real aspect, two items of self-leadership were 'very easy' – *I set clear goals, and I achieve what I set out to achieve*. Given that teachers find these items 'very easy' but find other aspects of leadership such as *I tell the principal of my early childhood philosophy and I am a confident public speaker about early childhood education*, 'hard', a discrepancy is posed. Early childhood teachers in this study indicate they find it 'very easy' to set clear goals and achieve what they set out to achieve. By the same token, research has indicated that,

to date, early childhood teachers have failed to communicate their philosophy to others (Cassidy & Lawrence, 2000; David, 1993; Ebbeck, 1990; McLean et al., 1992; Stonehouse, 1994). Given that teachers in this study reported that they generally achieve what they set out to achieve, the question arises as to whether early childhood teachers have consciously set the goal or set out to achieve communicating their philosophy to others.

For over a decade, researchers have emphasised the need for teachers to be provided with opportunities to develop leadership skills both at the undergraduate and graduate levels (Bloom & Sheerer, 1992; Fullan, 1994; Hargreaves, 1997; Rodd, 1987; Wasley, 1991). However, to date, it seems little progress has been made in this area, with teachers in the present study reporting that they would like stronger leadership skills. In addition, teachers in this study find it hard to say they would like to enact leadership in particular areas. For example, they find it 'hard' to say they would like to take a leadership role outside their classroom. Failure to enact leadership beyond their classroom may be due to teachers lacking confidence in this area (Chemers & Watson, 2000), and feeling 'territorial' or 'defensive' (Walker-Duff, 1997). It may also be due to teachers not perceiving themselves as leaders (Kolb, 1999; Stone, Horejs, & Lomas, 1997), or not viewing advocacy as a part of their role, or a lack of success in this area, leading to a feeling of 'detachment' or withdrawal (Duke, 1994). Given that findings from this study indicate teachers find it more difficult than they would like, to enact leadership in articulating and communicating early childhood philosophy and pedagogy, there is a need to find out what teachers believe hinder them in fulfilling this role and what they believe would help them develop the skills to fulfill this role. These questions are addressed, in part, in the next four chapters through analysis of the open-ended questions from the questionnaire. They are also addressed in the course of the follow-up interviews in phase two of the study.

### **Improvements to the Model of Early Childhood Teacher Leadership**

The Early Childhood Teacher Leadership model needs further testing and refinement. Given that there were too many 'easy' items in the scale and too few 'harder' items to match the higher Teacher Leadership scores, subsequent versions of

the scale of Teacher Leadership would need to include more 'harder' items to target these higher scores. Inclusion of further 'harder' items would improve the model.

Similarly, the number of items that did not fit the model was a cause for reflection. It may be that improved wording of some items may result in a fit to future models, or it may be necessary to include additional or different aspects of teacher leadership. It has been suggested that one issue that may have some bearing on the direction of future models of teacher leadership is that there needs to be a clearer distinction between 'good teaching' and leadership (Waugh, Boyd & Corrie, 2001). It may be that a number of items in the existing model incorporate good teaching in the classroom rather than teaching as leadership beyond the classroom. However, it should be noted that others have included the element of good teaching in the classroom within the role of teacher leadership and highlighted it as being a prerequisite to communicating good or best practice to others (Good & Brophy, 1991; Wasley, 1991). Further, others have supported the notion that everyday tasks are discourses of leadership (Silva, Gimbert & Nolan, 2000; Waniganayake, Nienhuys, Kapsalakis & Morda, 1998) and that leadership involves both "day to day tasks and those tasks that have their focus in the future" (Nivala, 1998, p. 59).

It is also possible to expand the existing model beyond ideal and real views to incorporate a capability view with the expectation of being ordered from low (real self-views), to medium (capability self-views), to high (ideal self-views). Each stem-item could be reworded to reflect a series of ordered Guttman patterns. For example, in Self-leadership, the stem-item *I know my own weaknesses* could be expanded to include: 1) I know my own weaknesses; 2) I could overcome my own weaknesses if I wanted to; and 3) I work at overcoming my own weaknesses. These series of items are expected to be ordered from 'easy' (1), to 'medium' (2) to 'hard' (3). An example of this type of model, and its testing, is provided in Waugh (2001c).

There is a need to test this model in other countries. Early childhood practitioners in other countries will be immersed in different contexts and cultures and their perceptions of leadership may vary. Hujala (1998, p. 30) highlighted the need for measurement instruments and scales to be tested across cultures, saying they need to be "validated separately in each culture". Testing the instrument in different cultures will glean data that provides insight into links between early childhood teachers' perceptions of leadership and contexts or cultural settings.

## Summary

This chapter has described the process of data analysis for the model of Early Childhood Teacher Leadership and presented the results with an explanation of the 92 item scale. The major findings from this chapter arise from the 92 item scale which has 38 real items and 54 ideal items that fit the model of Early Childhood Teacher Leadership. It was found that the ideal aspect of leadership in the areas of General Leadership, Communication and Influence, makes a larger contribution to the scale. Thus teachers reached a greater consensus, ideally, on the 'difficulties' of various aspects of leadership. As conceptualised from the outset, it was also found that, in general, teachers found it 'easier' to respond positively to the ideal items than the real items. The areas in which teachers found it 'harder' to respond positively were in Communications from the principal, children's parents, and other teachers to me; My influence on the principal; and My influence on the school. Within these aspects of leadership, the early childhood teachers reported they find it 'hard' or 'very hard' to say they are given positive feedback on their program or asked questions about their philosophy by others. In addition, they find it 'hard' to say that they are able to influence school processes such as decision-making, or influence the principal and other staff in the school, with regard to early childhood education. Given that teachers perceive these aspects of leadership as the more difficult to enact, one may infer that they will also experience difficulty in advocating successfully, for early childhood philosophy.

The major implication arising from the analysis is that while early childhood teachers would like to have higher ideal views for the various aspects of leadership, they appear to experience difficulty in putting them into practice. Consequently, there is a need to find out what factors help or hinder early childhood teachers in enacting these leadership skills. The next chapter investigates these issues.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

### **DATA ANALYSIS: SECTION C (PART A)**

This chapter begins with a description of the process undertaken to analyse data from Section C of the questionnaire which was comprised of four parts consisting of open-ended questions that sought further information about each respondent's experiences and views with regard to leadership in early childhood education. This section of the questionnaire is presented in four parts, comprising four chapters. Part A of Section C (Chapter 8) identifies factors that early childhood teachers reported help them to explain their philosophy to the principal, children's parents and other teachers in the school. Part B of Section C (Chapter 9) identifies factors that early childhood teachers reported hindered their explanations of their philosophy to the principal, children's parents and other teachers in the school. Part C of Section C (Chapter 10) sought to identify strategies that early childhood teachers reported they used to communicate their philosophy to others. Part D of Section C (Chapter 11) examined further comments and views that respondents had on leadership with regard to communicating their early childhood philosophy. Following a description of the process of analysis, the findings are presented for each section. Together, these four chapters further address research questions one, two and three, outlined in Chapter One. That is, how do early childhood teachers conceptualise their role with regard to leadership; what factors do they report enhance or constrain their leadership abilities; and what strategies do they use to explain their philosophy to the principal, children's parents and other teachers in the school?

#### **Process of analysis**

Of the 272 questionnaires returned, 24 (nine percent) did not provide any responses for the open-ended questions in section C of the questionnaire. A qualitative process informed by Miles and Huberman (1994) and Strauss and Corbin (1990) was followed for the analysis of the open-ended questions. Each question or

more specifically, each part of the question, was analysed separately for its content. For example, the first question *Factors that help me to explain the early childhood way of teaching to the following people...* was analysed in three parts. That is, factors that helped explain early childhood teaching to the principal as part one, to children's parents as part two, and to other teachers as part three.

For each question, the responses were read a number of times to gain an understanding of general themes and to identify possible codes or headings to represent the primary data. This task of initial data analysis began the process of data reduction by establishing categories or 'clusters' as referred to by Miles and Huberman (1994). A start list was devised whereby codes representing short headings were assigned to responses and the respondent number was entered into a display grid formed by the cluster headings. Varying numbers of cluster start lists were created for each question. However, during this initial analysis process some clusters were changed and, in all cases, the number of cluster headings was increased as analysis progressed. For example, in the analysis of the first question, a start list of 19 cluster headings had been devised for factors that helped explain early childhood teaching to the principal. Throughout the process of coding and assigning responses to cluster headings, it was found that additional clusters were needed, and by the end of the process, the number of clusters used for this question had increased from 19 to 30 headings. In some instances, new cluster headings were added, but in others, it was considered necessary to split an existing heading that was deemed too broad into two or more related headings, as during the process, clusters within clusters became evident. For other questions, less additional cluster headings were necessary. For example, analysis for part three of the second question resulted in 16 cluster headings, 13 of which had been established at the outset with only three categories added during the process of analysis.

The number of codes assigned to responses varied. Some responses were assigned a single code such as in the case of the response "lack of interest" while others were assigned several. For example, the response of person 190 to question b, part three (190:b.3):

Teachers with the mentality that ECE is 'play' who don't interact at all with junior teachers or who choose to remain ignorant of early childhood practice.

This response was assigned three codes, 1) lack of value /importance placed on ECE, 2) attitude, and 3) lack of understanding of ECE. In instances where examples of responses are cited under cluster headings later in the chapter, the whole response is most often included, rather than just the section bearing the relevant code. A belief was held that, in many instances, the reader could obtain more meaning when the relevant text was presented embedded in its original context.

During the first stage of analysis, some categories or cluster headings had as few as one entry. If it was not clearly evident that a particular response could be included under an existing cluster, then a new heading was devised. Examples of single entry headings for question (b) *Factors that hinder explaining early childhood teaching* were 'prejudice of male teachers' (134:b.3) referring to respondent number 134 for question (b), part three); 'media influences' (160:b.2); and 'not part of meeting agenda' (63:b.1). It was not intended at this point to engage in further data reduction of reducing the number of categories by grouping clusters together to form meta-clusters (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This was to happen at a later stage of analysis. Beginning with more specific categories or clusters in a display grid facilitated the process of forming broader categories or meta-clusters at a later point in analysis.

At the beginning stage of analysis, several dilemmas arose. In their responses to particular questions, some respondents provided information sought by other questions and, in such instances, a decision was made to code and record the responses under the clusters in the questions to which they pertained. In other cases, responses overlapped enabling categorising within more than one question. For example some respondents confused or made no distinction between 'factors' in question (a) and 'strategies' in question (c). Some responses in question (a) could be interpreted as strategies and conversely, some responses in question (c) could be interpreted as factors. For example, in question (a), 20 respondents cited showing the principal research articles or other documents relating to early childhood education, as a factor that helped them communicate their philosophy. However, in the researcher's view, this was more a strategy and a decision was made to include these responses in the strategies section, question (c). Further, some responses could be interpreted as either strategies or factors. For example, responses referring to good communication skills were written by most teachers in terms of factors, but

some teachers referred to them as strategies (for example, 99:C.2 and 232:C.2). As the majority of respondents referred to communication skills as a factor, a decision was made to include the cluster heading in question (a) only, but to include those responses from question (c) strategies.

Another problem that arose during the course of analysis was that it was not possible to ascertain the meaning of some responses with any certainty. In these instances, responses were simply discarded. Once all responses had been assigned to a cluster, the process of reading, and reading again, the responses within the clusters continued. This process of comparing responses within and across clusters involved looking for similarities or links between clusters. In this manner, cluster headings were reduced as themes emerged for the inclusion of two or more clusters under the one heading, thus forming a meta cluster (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This process was not clear cut and involved moving clusters back and forth until end clusters were determined. By the end of the process, most single item clusters had also been assigned to a meta cluster.

Once the process of forming meta clusters was complete, the number of responses under each heading was tallied. Percentages were calculated based on the 248 returns that included responses to section C of the questionnaire. Summaries of results of analysis of data from the open-ended questions are presented in Tables 8.1 through to 10.3 and Figure 11. Tables 8.1, 8.2 and 8.3 (Part A) show reported factors that help early childhood teachers communicate their philosophy to the principal, parents and other teachers. Tables 9.1, 9.2 and 9.3 (Part B) show factors that hinder early childhood teachers in their attempts to communicate their philosophy to the principal, parents and other teachers. Tables 10.1, 10.2 and 10.3 (Part C) present strategies that early childhood teachers use to communicate their philosophy to the principal, parents and other teachers in the school. A summary of analysis of results for responses to Part D, seeking additional comments about leadership with regard to explaining early childhood philosophy is presented in Figure 11.

### **Factors that help to explain the early childhood way of teaching to others.**

This section presents the findings on the factors that early childhood teachers reported helped them to communicate their philosophy to others in the school. The reported factors are presented from three aspects 1) factors that help communicate



philosophy to the principal, 2) factors that help communicate philosophy to children's parents, and 3) factors that help communicate philosophy to other teachers in the school. Each aspect is introduced by a table summary of the factors, followed by examples of responses to facilitate an audit trail. A concluding summary is presented at the end of each aspect, but a discussion of the findings is not presented until the concluding comments in Chapter Eleven, where the findings from Parts A, B, C and D are considered together.

### **Factors that help communications with the principal**

Teachers reported eight clusters of factors that help them communicate their philosophy to the principal and these are summarised in Table 8.1.

Table 8.1

#### Factors that help communications with the principal

Factor	Number of teachers	Percentage
1. My confidence /belief in philosophy /training	54	22%
2. Principal interest /support	47	19%
3. Principal knowledge /understanding	42	17%
4. Principal involvement /visits to centre	36	15%
5. Principal personality /leadership style	31	13%
6. Time – both setting time aside for regular contact	21	8%
7. Support from others	17	7%
8. Open communication /good relations	7	3%

#### Notes on tables for this chapter

1. The source of information in the tables of this chapter is the responses to Section C (Part A) of the questionnaire. Of the 272 questionnaires returned, 248 contained responses to Section C, thus percentages are calculated based on  $n = 248$ .

2. Each table may contain a total that exceeds or falls short of  $n = 248$  or 100 % for two reasons. The first reason is that some teachers included more than one factor within their responses, and thus were assigned to more than one category, resulting in the total number of teachers being greater than 248. The second reason is that some teachers did not respond to particular questions, or the meaning of their response was not clear, which resulted in the total number of teachers being less than 248.
- 

The factor identified most frequently by early childhood teachers (54, 22 percent) that helped them communicate their philosophy to the principal was their own confidence in their knowledge and beliefs. Examples of comments included:

My absolute belief in the way I teach young children (62:a.1)

My years of experience and my qualifications (111:a.1)

My up to date study at uni (250:a.1)

The second most frequently identified factor (47, 19 percent) was that interest and support from the principal helped early childhood teachers communicate their philosophy. Typical of the comments were:

Having an interested listener, one who wants to know about what is going on (29:a.1).

A principal who is actively listening and recognises the fundamental importance of ECE philosophy and practice and is not simply paying me lip service (58:a.1).

He's fairly open minded and listens to concerns I have and is also supportive (265:a.1).

He accepts [preprimary teachers] as professionals and values our decisions etc (234:a.1).

Also included under this cluster heading was the response from one teacher who believed her principal was young and keen to impress his superiors and therefore, showed some interest in the preprimary area (165:a.1). Included also were responses from three other teachers that related to principals' interest through asking questions or input from the early childhood teachers. For example:

He asks my advice and opinions on ECE topics (121:a.1).

He asks for my opinion on a range of school decision-making ideas (107:a.1).

The third most frequently identified factor (42, 17%) that helped communications was the principal's knowledge and understanding of early childhood philosophy indicated by such comments such as:

The principal believes in ECE philosophy, developmental learning and less structured learning (41:a.1).

He is interested in and believes in what we are doing. He sees early learning as crucial and the potential boundless (59:a.1).

Included in this cluster heading were two factors which were believed to enhance a principal's understanding of early childhood philosophy. Two teachers cited a principal who had preprimary aged children in his family (115:a.1; 244:a.1) and another made mention of a principal whose daughter was completing early childhood education training (252:a.1).

The fourth factor that helped communication of early childhood philosophy to the principal was the principal being involved in early childhood activities and visiting the centre (36, 15 percent). For example:

The principal coming into the room and being part of the program and me showing the principal what I am doing (37:a.1).

Principals who are willing to come into class and spend time there and get down to the child's level (55:a.1).

Try to get him to visit /speak to become involved in the program and children. See and hear what is happening. He is rarely seen in the preprimary (224:a.1)

The principal's personality and leadership style was identified as a fifth (31, 13 percent) factor that could help communications. Typical comments were:

Principal is a good listener and allows staff to use own professional judgement (131:a.1).

Principal is very approachable (147:a.1).

The principal is always positive about what I do and encourages me in lots of ways (258:a.1).

Another factor that helped communications was highlighted with a simple response: [The principal] is a woman! (198:a.1).

Making time available for regular contact between the principal and preprimary teacher was identified by some teachers as a sixth factor in helping to communicate their philosophy (21, 8%). Typical comments were:

Frequent and regular discussions with principal (1:a.1).  
[The principal] always makes time to talk (36:a.1).  
Open door approach by principal – availability (164:a.1).

A seventh factor which helped some teachers communicate their philosophy to principals was support from others (17, 7 percent). Ten teachers drew support from their peers in early childhood education with such comments as:

Working cooperatively with other preprimary teachers in the school (78:a.1).  
Discussions with other preprimary teachers (165:a.1).  
Having other preprimary teachers around to back you up (185:a.1).

Four teachers identified help from others in the form of principals attending early childhood oriented workshops or professional development. For example:

[Principal and early childhood teacher] going to a talk by ECE 'experts' together (5:a.1).  
Joint principal /ECE teacher workshops where ECE is a focus and there is an ECE presenter (204:a.1).

Two other sources of help from others were identified with one teacher citing parent pressure serving as a back up (68:a.1) and another two citing support from district office (169:a.1; 170:a.1).

An eighth factor identified by some teachers was that open communications and good relations between the principal and preprimary teacher helped them communicate their philosophy (7, 3 percent). For example:

Warm open door policy which encourages easy interaction – principal friendly and good listener (191:a.1).

Within this cluster heading, three teachers highlighted their own contribution to good relations with the principal. For example:

Being assertive but willing to compromise – see other point of view especially the whole school (138:a.1).  
Be positive and enthusiastic about what you are doing (118:a.1).

In summary, the factor cited most frequently that helps early childhood teachers communicate their philosophy and pedagogy to principals, is their own confidence and belief in their philosophy and training. However, the majority of factors cited overall by teachers pertain to attributes of the principal. The principals'

interest and support; knowledge and understanding; involvement in preprimary activities; and their personality or leadership style were the second through to fifth most common factors cited by early childhood teachers. Hence, while teachers' own confidence was the most common factor identified, the positive attributes of the principal also had considerable influence on the degree of ease with which teachers felt able to communicate their pedagogy and philosophy.

### **Factors that help communications with parents**

Teachers reported four clusters of factors summarised in Table 8.2 that help them communicate their philosophy to children's parents.

Table 8.2

#### **Factors that help communications with parents**

Factor	Number of teachers	Percentage
1. Parent contact opportunity	120	48%
2. Parent understanding /interest	59	24%
3. My confidence experience /training	40	16%
4. My good communication skills /rapport	23	9%

The factor cited most frequently that helped early childhood teachers communicate their pedagogy and philosophy to parents was the opportunities for parent contact within the early childhood program. Of the 120 responses, 92 teachers cited the parent roster system with parents electing to participate in the program as a good opportunity to communicate their pedagogy and philosophy. Another 28 teachers cited the opportunity provided for daily contact with informal conversations as parents drop off or collect their children. Examples of comments were:

Having [parents] in the class so they can actually experience what is happening – using this to explain/elaborate on ideas/philosophies (8:a.2).

I 'chat' often to form a rapport and often talk about the value of ECE (79:a.2)

Parents who are interested and spend time at my centre rather than just drop children off and run (191:a.2).

The second most frequently identified factor was parent understanding or interest (59, 24 percent). Of the 59 responses, 11 cited that parents asking questions aided communicating the early childhood philosophy. Examples of comments included:

When parents show an interest /ask questions (13:a.2).

Supportive and interested parents make a difference (86:a.2).

Parents' ability to understand and their interest in knowing about early childhood way of teaching (134:a.2).

Understanding parents who are willing to listen to another view point and try accepting the relevance of how we approach learning in early childhood settings (114:a.2).

The third most frequently cited factor was teachers' own confidence enhanced by their experience and training. Among the comments were:

Having a specific personal philosophy and knowing this and believing in it – experience (18:a.2).

The absolute belief in the way I teach young children (62:a.2).

My professional knowledge (141:a.2).

Confidence and clear concept of principles and beliefs (244:a.2).

The fourth factor identified by teachers was their own adept communication skills which helped them develop rapport and communicate with the parents about early childhood pedagogy and philosophy. For example:

Good communication skills. Willingness to listen to parent's needs, expectations etc. Being open and approachable (138:a.2).

Making sure [parents] feel welcome to come and talk to me anytime (248:a.2).

Included within this cluster heading were three responses that highlighted the factor of teachers being enthusiastic and positive helped communications with parents and two responses of treating parents as friends and partners in their child's development. For example:

Positive attitude, enthusiasm, commitment to them and their children, passion (130:c.2).

I believe the parents and myself have the child's interest at heart and I can explore this common ground as well as listen to them (268:a.2).

In summary, the most frequently cited factor that helped early childhood teachers communicate their pedagogy and philosophy to parents is the very nature or structure of the program. One common feature of early childhood programs is a daily parent roster system whereby parents elect to participate in the program, and another is that parents or caregivers need to deliver children to and collect children from the centre or classroom. These elements provide opportunities for parent-teacher contact on an informal basis, and thus opportunities for early childhood teachers to communicate their philosophy and pedagogy to parents.

The second most frequently reported factor was the degree of parents' interest in and understanding of early childhood education. If a parent showed interest in their child's educational program and was able to understand aspects of early childhood development, then it was easier for teachers to explain or communicate their philosophy to them. The final two factors cited by teachers pertained to themselves. Their own confidence or belief in their philosophy, supported by their experience and training helped them communicate it to parents and their reported adept communication skills helped teachers build rapport with and communicate their philosophy to parents.

**Factors that help communications with other teachers**

Teachers reported four clusters of factors summarised in Table 8.3 that help them communicate their philosophy to other teachers in the school.

Table 8.3  
Factors that help communications with other teachers

Factor	Number of teachers	Percentage
1. Other teachers' understanding /attitude /interest	36	15%
2. My confidence /experience /training	31	13%
3. Contact opportunities /collaborative planning	29	11%
4. Support from ethos/ culture of school	6	2%

The factor cited most frequently by early childhood teachers, that helped communicate their philosophy to other teachers in the school, was the degree of understanding, interest and attitude of the other teachers with regard to early childhood education (36, 15 percent). Examples of comments included:

Teachers who have an open mind and teachers who are interested in ECE (29:a.3).

Understanding that ECE is more than just glue /paint /play (73:a.3).

Teachers who can understand developmental learning and appreciate this process of progression in children at this particular age level (114:a.3).

Showing interest in what is happening in the preprimary classroom (259:a.3).

The second most frequently cited factor was early childhood teachers' own confidence supported by their experience and training (31, 13 percent). Typical comments were:

My qualifications and knowledge (92:a.1, 2 & 3).

I studied last year because I was interested in becoming an educational leader. This has helped tremendously because it has given me the knowledge and confidence to 'have my say' during staff meetings, planning days etc (123:d)

True belief in my early childhood philosophy and a good practical experience with children –others and my own, and a good teacher training (216:a.1, 2 & 3).

ECE experience over the years enables me to draw on my experiences and success when discussing ECE way of teaching (242:a.1, 2, & 3).

Within this cluster heading, was the response from one teacher that the 'status' of being four-year trained boosted their confidence (148:a.3). Three other teachers reported that their background in primary and secondary education helped them communicate their philosophy to other teachers (77, 198, 265). For example:

Possibly [other teachers] will listen because I have taught most primary grades – they respect this!! However, they don't really want to know (198:a.3).

I feel that I get more staff respect as an ex-high school teacher than I would get if I was a newly out early childhood teacher (265:d).

Ten other teachers believed that participating in professional development in early childhood education either boosted their confidence in communicating their



philosophy, or it helped to explain it to other teachers if they also attended. For example:

PD reflects the way we teach and how primary schools should take more of these methods on board (14:a.3).

Attending PD together [with other primary teachers] (23:a.3).

The third most frequently cited factor was the contact opportunities with other teachers in meetings and collaborative planning situations (29, 11 percent).

Typical comments were:

Our Preprimary /year one continuity program during term one each year. Great time for collaboration and sharing philosophies (121:a.3).

Weekly meetings with year one teachers -year one teachers not always receptive to suggestions (164:a.3).

P-3 strategy group, collaborative meetings (173:a.3).

Other factors cited by six teachers (2 percent) are encompassed under the fourth cluster heading of support from culture or ethos of the school. Included in this cluster were comments such as:

Relationships with staff – general ethos of the school (134:a.3).

Teachers who make you feel welcome in the staff room (190:a.3).

Encouragement and support from one or two key people in the school and my CIO at district office has provided other staff with a positive image of what I do – so I'm half way there when it comes to explaining what I do (108:a.3).

In summary, only one of the four factors cited by early childhood teachers pertain to themselves. It was reported that their own level of confidence supported by their experience and training helped them communicate their philosophy to other teachers. The remaining three factors cited were related to other teachers in the school and support from the system or culture of the school. That is, the attitude, understanding and interest of other teachers towards early childhood education; the opportunities provided within the school system for meetings or collaborative planning with other teachers; and the ethos or culture of the school providing support helped early childhood teachers communicate their philosophy.

## **CHAPTER NINE**

### **DATA ANALYSIS: SECTION C (PART B)**

#### **Factors that hinder explaining the early childhood way of teaching to others.**

This chapter presents the findings on the factors that early childhood teachers reported hindered communicating their philosophy to others in the school and in doing so, addresses one aspect of research question two outlined in Chapter One. The reported factors are presented in three parts 1) factors that hinder communicating their philosophy to the principal, 2) factors that hinder communicating their philosophy to children's parents, and 3) factors that hinder communicating their philosophy to other teachers in the school. As in the previous chapter (Part A) each aspect is introduced by a table summary of the factors, followed by examples of responses and a concluding summary. The information in the tables for this chapter is derived from teachers' responses to Section C (Part B) of the questionnaire. As in the previous chapter, each table may exceed or fall short of  $n = 248$  or 100 percent due to the fact that some responses refer to multiple factors and some teachers did not respond to particular questions.

#### **Factors that hinder communications with the principal**

Teachers reported nine clusters of factors that hindered them communicating their philosophy to the principal. These are summarised in Table 9.1. The most frequently cited factor that hindered communicating early childhood philosophy to the principal was the principal's lack of knowledge and understanding about early childhood education (87, 35 percent). Typical comments were:

Lack of understanding. The feeling that ECE should be the same as primary (1:b.1).

[Principal] academically driven. Narrow mindedness i.e. school academic goals should apply to all children (9:b.1).

[Principal] trained and taught in upper primary. No understanding of ECE and its importance – it is not valued (52:b.1).

The principal being ignorant of early childhood philosophy and unwilling to give ECE teachers a free rein (within reason) to teach in their own style (190:b.1).

Included in this cluster heading were comments from 17 teachers who cited the principal's lack of understanding or value of early childhood education extending to regarding them as 'mere babysitters'. For example:

Patronizing and put downs – 'But you only look after them, what can be so hard?' (23:b.1).

Being treated as a babysitter until they get to grade one and start to learn (55:b.1).

His arrogance and ignorance about ECE. Once he let it slip about it being "babysitting" (139:b.1).

Table 9.1

Factors that hinder communications with the principal

Factor	Number of teachers	Percentage
1. Principals' lack of knowledge /understanding	87	35%
2. Lack of time /opportunity	81	33%
3. Personality /leadership style	45	18%
4. Principals' lack of interest	39	16%
5. My lack of confidence	29	12%
6. ECE lowest priority /not included in whole school	24	10%
7. Principal focus on policy	19	8%
8. Principal does not visit centre	19	8%
9. Physical isolation/ distance	9	3%

The second most frequently cited factor that hindered communications with the principal, the lack of time or opportunity to communicate with the principal (81, 33 percent), was cited nearly equally as often as the first factor, the principals' lack of understanding. Examples of comments were:

[Principal] rarely on-site (33:b.1).

Limited time in the school. More focussed on primary levels – pass preprimary to deputy – too busy (42:b.1).

Lack of time and availability of the principal (71:b.1).

Finding a moment in his busy schedule to bring up some topic I need to explain (81:b.1).

The third factor reported by teachers was the personality or leadership style of the principal (45, 18 percent). For example:

Feeling like I'm talking to a brick wall or I'm being patronised mean I tend to give up (58:b.1).

An unapproachable 'I already know all I need to know' type of personality (107:b.1).

He must make all the decisions, does not tolerate a difference in opinion to his rather ignorant one. He has called me a maverick – he violates the ECE staff professionally – a menace! (139:b.1).

Autocratic, dictator style of leadership (269:b.1).

The fourth factor cited by teachers was the principal's apparent lack of interest in the early childhood program (39, 16 percent). Typical comments were:

[Principal's] lack of interest and not being involved in the classroom – you are just part of the school numbers (55:b.1).

There is no 'space' to speak into – not interested in listening! Too busy with management issues and EDWA stuff. Lack of education and understanding specific to ECE. Arrogance (138:b.1)

[Principals] are not interested in hearing about preprimary. It's bottom of their list and as long as we do our jobs and don't ask or disrupt previous ways of administration things will be OK (135:b.1).

Pigheadedness, lack of interest and lack of desire to understand anything that is non-traditional 'chalk and talk' (160:b.1).

Principal not really listening to me or not that interested (182:b.1).

The fifth factor that hindered communication of early childhood philosophy to the principal is teacher lack of confidence (29, 12 percent). Examples of comments were:

My lack of confidence and how well I can communicate verbally (13:b.2).

I feel a little intimidated about whether I know enough (25:b.1).

Getting tongue tied and nervous (31:b.1).

Just my own confidence. Overcoming shyness to speak out (260:b.1).

Included within this cluster heading were responses from ten teachers who lacked confidence in their articulation skills. For example:

Lack of confidence. I know how to run a quality early education program, however, I lack the confidence in expressing my view point (238:b.1).

My lack of knowledge. I can teach it but can not describe it in words (10:b.1).

Also included under this cluster heading were three situations which teachers reported contributed to their reduced confidence. The first of these was the lack of further study. The respondent reported completing teacher training 21 years ago and felt at a disadvantage not being four year trained or more up to date (3:b.1). Another teacher lacked confidence due to being the youngest member of staff and the least experienced of the preprimary teachers (42:b.1) and a third teacher reported that being a temporary staff member also reduced confidence (111:b.1).

The sixth factor reported by teachers (24, 10 percent) was early childhood education being regarded by the principal as the lowest priority in, or not a real part of, the primary school. For example:

Belief that preprimary is an appendage and not part of the big school (4: b.1).

Preprimary not automatically included in school activities...Preprimary not labelled a teaching area. Preprimary last to get computer and internet technology (44:b.1).

Principal views preprimary children as untidy and prefers the preprimary to be separate as opposed to integration (53:b.1).

It would seem that in some schools ECE is considered 'just play', not valuable, unimportant and is left out of important events or decision making...a prevailing attitude of this kind, ie. having to make ECE justify its very existence! (79:b.1).

Belief that preprimary 'doesn't count' in the big school (205:b.1).

The fact that we in P and K are not really considered to be in the school and that we don't really 'teach' the children (226:b.1).

The seventh cluster of factors was related to teachers being hindered in communicating their philosophy by the principal having an education department

policy focus at the expense of appropriate programs for young children (19, 8 percent). For example:

[Principal] too locked in, tied down to systems driven non negotiables. Preprimary must 'fit in' to the 'big picture' of the school as a whole! Political agendas come first! (89:b.1).

The [principal's] attitude and general lack of involvement and understanding of the developmental needs of the preprimary child as opposed to EDWA policies. EDWA policies seem to have little understanding of the developmental need of a five year old child (especially their limitations) (143:b.1).

He can be absent minded also he's a 'department man' and thus is locked in by 'the book' (265:b.1).

The principal wants to use the 'formula' in the most 'efficient' way possible. Not the way necessary in the best interest of the preprimary children (266:b.1).

Over zealous in following rules /policies designed for older pupils (269:b.1).

Reports by teachers that the principal failing to visit the preprimary room or centre was the eighth cluster of factors which hindered communicating early childhood philosophy (19, 8 percent). Typical comments were:

Lack of visits into the centre (122:b.1).

[The principal] doesn't have time to see my classroom in operation (145:b.1).

[The principal not] interested in coming into the preprimary to observe or participate in activities (152:b.1).

No contact with self or class. Only time I am addressed is when there is a problem or concern (267:b.1).

The ninth cluster of factors related to the physical isolation or distance of the preprimary from the primary school (9, 3 percent). For example:

ECE is still seen as a separate part of school – physical isolation even though on site, we are on the corner of school property, removed from main building (148:b.1).

Lack of contact – being so far from office etc (248:b.1).

Being off-site can be a hindrance (253:b.1).

One other teacher reported a factor that hindered communicating early childhood philosophy to the principal. This isolated factor emanated from a systems

level and it was not possible to group it under an existing cluster heading. The teacher stated:

In general, the education department is not promoting the ECE message strongly enough. Other principals are not as supportive of ECE philosophy [as the present principal is] (115:b.1).

In summary, the most frequently cited factor that teachers reported hinders their communicating early childhood philosophy to the principal is the principal's lack of knowledge or understanding of early childhood education. This factor was followed closely by the lack of time or availability within the school day to meet or communicate with the principal about early childhood matters. Of the nine clusters of factors reported, seven pertained to the principal, including the principal's lack of knowledge and understanding of early childhood education; lack of time to communicate with preprimary staff; personality or leadership style; lack of interest; placing early childhood education as the lower priority in the school; lack of visits to the preprimary room; and inappropriate policy focus of the principal. Only one factor, teachers' lack of confidence, was related to themselves and the remaining factor pertained to the system level, whereby the preprimary rooms were sometimes located at some distance from the main school.

### **Factors that hinder communications with parents**

Teachers reported eight clusters of factors that hindered them in communicating their philosophy to the principal. These are summarised in Table 9.2. The factor cited most frequently that hindered communicating early childhood philosophy to children's parents was the lack of parent contact or support (63, 25 percent). For example:

Attendance at ECE meetings – often the parents you wish to speak to don't attend (29:b.2).

Only can reach some parents. Others slip by with minimum contact (131:b.2).

Parents these days have no time to listen or read flyers etc. They have no time to come on parent roster or read to their child at night. We live in a time where we are considered to be the magic parents who can do everything for their children. Once they are at preprimary they wipe the responsibility of their support on to us – teachers can do everything (135:b.2)

Within this cluster were comments from 34 teachers that identified working parents or children transported to and from school by bus as hindrances to communicating early childhood philosophy. For example:

I have always worked at centres where children are bussed to school. No parents on roster, little daily contact and low parental involvement make it more difficult to put my point of view across (96:b.2).

Not being able to access the parents because they work, therefore infrequent contact with me and their child within the class (145:b.2).

Table 9.2

Factors that hinder communications with parents

Factor	Number of teachers	Percentage
1. Lack of parent contact /support	63	25%
2. Parent lack of understanding /knowledge	54	22%
3. Lack of importance/value placed on ECE by parents	40	16%
4. Parent expectations	35	14%
5. Parent personality /attitude	25	10%
6. My lack of confidence	19	8%
7. Lack of time -- own and parents	17	7%
8. Language /cultural differences	11	4%

Six teachers also identified parent hardship or shyness as a contributing factor to a lack of parent contact or support. For example:

Mostly lower socioeconomic areas and are busy living their lives coping with poverty, domestic crisis, violence, Aboriginal/ESL backgrounds – too shy to come to class /school etc (36:b.2).

Many [parents] are illiterate themselves and education isn't a high priority. Have had bad experiences as children at school so very reluctant to come into the classroom. Very shy in communicating with teacher. Feel they can't contribute to children's education. Failure to turn up to parent group meetings (4:b.2).



The second most frequently identified factor was some parents' lack of understanding or knowledge about early childhood education (54, 22 percent). Typical comments were:

Belief held by some parents that preprimary is a 'school readiness' year...[or the belief] that at preprimary all the children do is play without understanding the role of play in learning (27:b.2).

Lack of knowledge and appreciation of the important role ECE offers children in the whole school years and what it involves in its entirety (109:b.1, 2).

The third most frequently cited factor was the lack of value or importance placed on early childhood education by some parents (40, 16 percent). Among the comments were:

Parents place less importance on preprimary than primary schooling. Lack of understanding of how young children learn eg. hands on real life experiences versus worksheets and pen and paper (44:b.2).

Parents do not view preprimary teachers as 'real' teachers (100:b.2).

The attitude that kindy is a form of baby sitting – not very important in fostering their education. School starts in grade one and anything before that isn't that important (191:b.2).

The fourth most frequently reported factor was that parent expectations sometimes hindered teachers in communicating early childhood philosophy (35, 14 percent). For example:

When [parents] expect ECE to produce neat formal work and think art etc is not appropriate for school (1:b.2).

Parents who believe only their child is right and you only need to worry about their one not 27 children in a class. Parents who are only interested in academic achievement /computers (26:b.2).

Some parents expect more formal learning /teaching (115:b.2).

The fifth most frequently reported factor was the personality or attitude of some parents (25, 10 percent). For example:

Unresponsive parents who do not seem interested in education and think I only baby sit! (25:b.2).

They are often disinterested. They just want to drop their kids off and leave (155:b.2).

Included in this cluster were nine responses that cited parents' own experiences with school that may contribute to their having a particular attitude towards their child's education. For example:

[Lack of] openness. Especially if parents have had unhappy experiences with school or feel threatened by the school environment (87:b.2).

Also included in the cluster were six responses that cited aggressive parents as hindering communications. For example:

A parent's anger and hostility towards something that has happened or not happening as they would wish (41:b.2).

Aggressive parents. I am shy. Can be awkward if parents not communicative (251:b.2).

Other responses included in this cluster were from three teachers who reported some parents as being teachers themselves, but with primary or secondary training. The respondents believed that these parent teachers 'looked down' on their own early childhood qualifications (249, 250, 254).

The sixth most frequently identified cluster of factors pertained to the respondents' lack of confidence, including their lack of articulation and communications skills (19, 8 percent). Typical comments were:

My own inadequacies in being articulate (129:b.2).

I feel as though my communication skills are not great – lack of confidence – worse with angry parents (186:b.2).

Personally, I can do it, but I'm lousy at explaining it (153:d).

The seventh cluster of factors pertained to a lack of time for both parents and teachers (17, 7 percent). Most responses were stated simply as 'time' or 'lack of time', however, three provided a little more detail:

Time without toddlers /babies (141:b.2).

Time to [talk] – to suit everyone (185:b.2).

When I have the opportunity to talk with parents I'm usually working with children and likely to be interrupted (246:b.2).

The eighth cluster heading encompassed hindrances in the form of language or cultural differences (11, 4 percent). For example:

ESL parents doubt own ability to communicate (87:b.2).

Occasionally parents from other cultures expect all schooling to be formal (90:b.2).

Language difficulties – eg ESL and availability of interpreters (196:b.2).

Different cultural background and philosophy – lack of common ground (203:b.2).

Two other isolated factors were identified with one teacher citing media influences from such programs as ‘A Current Affair’ (160:b.3) reporting hot housing type programs for learning. The other teacher reported that being a male teacher in a female dominated profession (167:b.3) was a hindrance to communicating early childhood philosophy to children’s parents.

In summary, five of the eight clusters of factors that teachers reported hindered communicating their philosophy to children’s parents stemmed from the parents. The factors included parents’ lack of contact or support; knowledge or understanding; expectations; personality or attitude; and low importance assigned to early childhood education. One further factor, the lack of time, was attributed to both parents and teachers, but only one factor, teachers lack of confidence, related to themselves. The eighth factor arose from a cultural level with language and cultural differences being a source of hindrance to communicating early childhood philosophy.

### **Factors that hinder communications with other teachers**

Teachers reported six clusters of factors that hindered them in communicating their philosophy to other teachers in the school. These are summarised in Table 9.3. The most frequently cited factor that hindered communicating early childhood philosophy to other teachers in the school was the lack of value or importance placed on early childhood education by other staff (78, 31 percent). For example:

Disinterest as preprimary is not compulsory therefore its ‘not important’. Condescending attitude when something is explained – lack of interest in ECE (36:b.3).

Lack of interest. Appears to be a complete lack of value placed on preprimary. They don’t have a true understanding and hence do not see the value of preprimary education (143:b.3).

[Other teachers'] negative attitudes to our play based program. They don't see it as real work or real learning, don't see any relevance (146:b.3).

Teachers who do not value early childhood education or early childhood philosophy (220:b.3).

Table 9.3

Factors that hinder communications with other teachers

Factor	Number of teachers	Percentage
1. Lack of value / importance placed on ECE	78	31%
2. Attitude /personality	63	25%
3. Lack of time/opportunity for discussion/collaboration	58	23%
4. Lack of understanding /knowledge ECE	52	21%
5. My lack of confidence	14	5%
6. ECE minority on school staff	3	1%

Of the responses in the first cluster, 52 highlighted the incidence of other teachers in the school not considering early childhood teachers to be 'real' teachers. Among the comments were:

'Only play', 'not real teaching'. Not valuing play. Think ECE staff are less intelligent because work in play with younger children (30:b.3).

Seen as only the kindy teacher. I've had a teacher refer to my job as child minding (33:b.3).

[Other teachers'] beliefs that upper primary rules. Whatever we do down in the preprimary is not 'real' teaching (96:b.3).

Also in this first cluster of responses, seven teachers cited derisive comments from other school staff about early childhood education. For example:

Usually good natured but general derision with referral to 'little land' and 'unmanageable' preprimary children (27:b.3).

Most are plain not interested in what happens in other classrooms. The fact that my children have been called 'vermin' and the preprimary area is known as the 'pig pen' (82:b.3).

I have been referred to as just the 'toy teacher' by colleagues (98:b.3).

Constant degrading comments about the importance of preprimary teaching – 'You don't count because all you do is finger painting' 'Why do you do reports, what do you have to report about?' (107:b.3).

The second most frequently cited factor was the attitude or personality of other teachers in the school (63, 25 percent). For example:

Not understanding what you do or why and they don't want to know. The longer you are at a school the more you are accepted. At district high schools with high school teachers you are a leper, they move tables rather than talk to someone they don't have anything in common with (55:b.3).

ECE teachers have a very low status in other teachers' eyes. They don't give you credit for your knowledge and assume you know nothing about their area of expertise. Some teachers even think you have less training than them. They don't think you can 'handle' older children and never give you the chance to do so. They think you're a bit 'soft' on the kids (123:b.3).

Arrogance, disinterest, ...lack of respect, fear of different methods of working. They say 'I don't have an aide or all that DOTT time so I can't do that' – negative attitudes (138:b.3).

[Other teachers] just being unwilling to listen (210:b.3).

Junior primary teachers who are set in their ways and not open to working collaboratively and sharing ideas, resources etc (266:b.3).

Included in this second cluster of responses were 44 that cited other teachers' lack of interest in early childhood education. For example:

ECE approach is obviously not of interest (41:b.3).

They are not interested if it doesn't impact on their territory (150:b.3).

Lack of interest from other teachers/ Primary /secondary trained teachers assuming their qualification is superior to ECE. Their presuming much of ECE is simply 'play' or 'babysitting' (249:b.3).

Also within this cluster were 14 responses that reported other teachers resented or doubted the necessity of the preprimary aide and allocated day for duties other than teaching time (DOTT). For example:

Jealousy that ECE has more DOTT (1:b.3).

Don't value preprimary teachers as 'full' teachers. We just play at preprimary and have 'a day off' – DOTT (84:b.3).

They feel that formal learning only begins in year one and that we get it easy at preprimary – non-contact day plus an aide (164:b.3).

One other response highlighted the attitude of some teachers that the purpose of the preprimary year is to 'get children ready' for year one (120:b.3) and another reported prejudice from male teachers as a hindrance to communicating early childhood philosophy (134:b.3).

The third cluster heading was the lack of time or opportunity for discussion and collaboration with other primary staff in the school (58, 23%). Among the comments were:

Very little opportunity is given to explain to other teachers about early childhood teaching (9:c.3).

[My] not being in the staff room very often eg. recess or lunch (37:b.3).

Lack of involvement. The preprimary and school schedules are very different. Hence not a lot of chance to mix and see what each other does and why (71:b.3).

Not the time to be with other staff. We are all so busy (261:b.3).

Included in this cluster, were four responses that reported the isolated setting of the preprimary in relation to the primary school was a factor that hindered communications with other teachers (122, 173, 209, 246).

The fourth cluster heading of factors was other teachers' lack of understanding about early childhood education or developmentally appropriate practice (52, 21 percent). Typical comments were:

[Other teachers have] no understanding of ECE and developmentally appropriate practice (1:b.3).

Ignorant teachers who see ECE teachers as having no expectations for their students and think it's easier!...Teachers who underestimate the importance of play and don't understand developmental based learning and developmental appropriate practice (114:b.3).

[Teachers] at other levels lack appreciation of developmental needs of young children (197:b.3).

[Other teachers] having little understanding of the differences between preprimary and a traditional classroom (234:b.3).

The fifth cluster of factors related to early childhood teachers' lack of confidence in themselves (14, 5 percent). For example:

Lack of confidence in myself and my knowledge (102:b.1, 2, & 3).

I feel a general lack of confidence in explaining early childhood philosophy because I know that the attitude of other staff /principal is one of disinterest and lack of understanding and valuing of the preprimary sector (143:d).

Another hindrance to communicating early childhood philosophy to other teachers, highlighted in three responses forming the sixth cluster, was the fact that early childhood practitioners are the minority of school staff. One respondent wrote at length:

Early childhood educators are in the minority on the school staff. It takes courage to take a stand which my ECE colleagues and I are prepared to do but we get absolutely no support from the district office...The curriculum improvement officers are more intent on carrying favour with principals. ECE is very much under threat. ECE either needs its own campus or we need genuine support from district office i.e. making a clear and decisive stand for ECE philosophy. We continually have to compromise until there is nothing left to compromise with (139:b.3, d).

Two other isolated factors were highlighted in responses. One teacher reported that a competitive rather than cooperative school culture was a hindrance to communicating early childhood philosophy to other teachers (87), while another cited the high proportion of temporary teachers, and hence a lack of continuity in school staff, as a hindrance to communicating their philosophy (20).

In summary, three of the six clusters of factors related to other teachers' attitudes, personality or understanding of early childhood education. Two of the clusters were systems related. One was a lack of time or opportunity available within the working day to collaborate with other teachers and the other was the situation of early childhood practitioners being the minority of school staff. Only one cluster of factors reported to be a hindrance in communicating early childhood philosophy to other teachers was attributed to early childhood practitioners, namely their own lack of confidence. These factors identified by teachers are discussed in more depth in Chapter Eleven where conclusions and implications are drawn from Parts A, B, C and D in Phase One of the study.

## CHAPTER TEN

### DATA ANALYSIS: SECTION C (PART C)

#### Strategies for communicating philosophy to others

This chapter presents findings in the same format used in Parts A and B. Strategies, that early childhood teachers reported they used to communicate their philosophy to others, are presented from the three aspects of communicating philosophy to the principal, to children's parents, and to other teachers in the school. Examples of responses and a summary of strategies are included in the material to follow. The information in the tables for this chapter is derived from teachers' responses to Section C (Part C) of the questionnaire. As in the preceding two chapters, each table may exceed or fall short of  $n = 248$  or 100 percent due to the fact that some responses refer to multiple factors and some teachers did not respond to particular questions.

#### Strategies for communicating philosophy to the principal

Teachers reported seven clusters of strategies they use to communicate their philosophy to the principal. These are summarised in Table 10.1.

Table 10.1

#### Strategies for communicating with the principal

Strategy	No. teachers	Percentage
1. Discussions planned /unplanned	97	39%
2. Invitations for principal involvement	79	32%
3. Show principal work samples /portfolios	61	25%
4. Show principal latest research /documents	61	25%
5. Involve self in whole school planning /activities	51	21%
6. Be assertive and proactive	27	11%
7. Give principal copy of program /philosophy	24	10%



The strategy identified most frequently (97, 39 percent) by early childhood teachers to communicate their philosophy to the principal involved planned or unplanned discussions. Typical comments were:

Conversation (planned and unplanned) (27:c.1).

Informal chats (35:c.1).

Weekly meetings – half an hour to tell what we are doing and why – few principals want to give you this (55:c.1).

Discussions about programs. Discussions about appropriate practice (99:c.1).

In accountability meetings. When discussing CIP [curriculum improvement plans], plotting of children on continuums, in staff meetings etc (247:c.1).

Within this cluster of strategies were discussions held during performance appraisal or accountability meetings with the principal, a strategy that 31 teachers reported they employed.

The second most frequently reported strategy (79, 32 percent) was to issue invitations to the principal to encourage involvement and visits to the preprimary room. For example:

Inviting him down to see the environment, children's work (and at work) and interact and speak with the children (103:c.1).

Involving the principal by inviting him to morning tea or read a story. Send the children to principal with some special work /picture etc (157:c.1).

Invite the principal to become involved and spend a morning /day in the classroom. Then discuss points as questions are raised about children's learning (222:c.1)

Invitations to join in activities /excursions etc with explanations of how /why/who etc (245:c.1).

Another strategy reported by teachers (61, 25 percent) was to show the principal samples of children's work throughout the year and the work samples collated in children's portfolios. Among the comments on strategies were:

Sending children to see the principal with their work. Showing /sharing good things (58:c.1).

Involve [the principal] in class projects – open art exhibitions, visit our underwater world or dam in the sand pit etc. Send cooking samples to their office with articulate 'cooks', send children to 'share' when they have achieved a personal goal (61:c.1).

Showing children's work and having children show and tell what they've done/ learnt (115:c.1).

Sixty-one teachers (25 percent) cited the next strategy of showing the latest research on early childhood education, or other related documents, to the principal. Included in this cluster heading were eight strategies that involved reporting to the principal about professional development undertaken in the early childhood field. Responses included:

Talking about my [professional development] (paid for by myself!). Books bought and [study] units, also philosophies around the world – USA, Italy –Reggio Emilia (72:c.1).

Handing on interesting articles (111:c.1).

Up to date information – journals, internet, P.D., sharing readings (115:c.1).

Getting [principal] to proofread the memo to parents re my philosophy and teaching programs for the term (155:c.1).

Citing latest research and giving photocopies of journal articles (164:c.1).

Direct [principal] to system (EDWA) policy and documentation that backs me up (244:c.1).

The next most frequently cited strategy (51, 21 percent) was to become involved in whole school planning and activities. Included in this cluster heading were 15 responses that reported talking in terms of the Curriculum Framework to help communicate their philosophy to principals. In addition, 14 teachers emphasised the importance of being vocal during whole school staff meetings and 8 teachers cited the strategy of electing to be on committees valued by the principal. Among the responses were:

Talk about PP in relation to Curriculum Framework – that's what we do! (11:c.1).

Ensure we are involved in all aspects of the school (45:c.1).

Ensure we say what we think and believe in the best interest of our classes at staff meetings and in any discussions with our principal (71:c.1).

Using my role as Technology and Enterprise Coordinator to show examples of preprimary T & E activities (152:a.1).

Being on lots of committees and taking on other roles in the school which are valued by my principal (32:a.1).

The next most frequently reported strategy (27, 11 percent) was to be assertive and proactive within the school. Included in this cluster heading were nine responses that highlighted the importance of harnessing every opportunity that arose to communicate early childhood philosophy. Three other responses cited the need to have a balanced and professional approach, and be willing to compromise and another three highlighted the importance of being well prepared for discussions about aspects of early childhood philosophy. Four teachers reported using the strategy of telling the principal about 'successes' in the preprimary program. Examples of comments about strategies employed by early childhood teachers to communicate their philosophy to the principal included:

Always be aware of an opportunity during conversation to explain the early childhood way of teaching (4:c.1).

Be prepared with arguments to support the ECE approach and offer appropriate alternatives (41:c.1).

Balanced, professional, non-confrontational approach. Offer solutions /compromises myself then seek agreement. Ask their opinions – this has surprised me in the past when I've found them to actually share my beliefs about ECE (96:c.1).

Being proactive in administrative and organisational issues – the things principals like! (100:a.1).

I keep him informed – particularly about successes! (108:c.1).

Always state rationale for decisions affecting ECE – all decisions are based on philosophy. Have a professional attitude at all times – develop a positive relationship [with the principal] (162:c.1).

The seventh strategy reported by teachers (24, 10 percent) was to provide the principal with a copy of their early childhood program or philosophy. Included in this cluster of strategies were five responses that cited strengthening their discussions with the principal by providing supporting documents of children's progress.

Examples of responses included:

My planning file includes philosophy of ECE and importance of a play based program and environment (114:c.1).

My anecdotal records and portfolios are a powerful justification of the child initiated program I am running. They prove I get great results from this style of teaching (123:c.1).

Copies of newsletter /notes to parents etc. These include a report of my program. Sample books – principal sights and comments (153:c.1).

In summary, as a global strategy, teachers reported using planned and unplanned discussions as a forum for communicating early childhood philosophy to the principal. Closely related to this global strategy was the need, reported by some teachers, to be assertive and proactive in communicating early childhood philosophy to the principal. Part of being proactive and assertive are the suggested strategies of issuing invitations for the principal to become involved in aspects of the early childhood program, early childhood teachers involving themselves in whole school planning and activities, and harnessing every opportunity that arises to communicate early childhood philosophy to the principal. In addition, early childhood teachers have suggested the strategies of providing their principals with copies of their program and philosophy, and showing children's work, research articles, related documents and reports on professional development in early childhood education.

### **Strategies for communicating philosophy to children's parents**

Teachers reported six clusters of strategies they use to communicate their philosophy to children's parents. These are summarised in Table 10.2.

Table 10.2

#### **Strategies for communicating with parents**

Strategy	Number of teachers	Percentage
1. Parent meetings /sessions informal and formal	126	51%
2. Written materials /newsletters /displays /notice board	116	47%
3. Work samples /portfolios	92	37%
4. Parent-teacher interviews	78	31%
5. Informal discussions	45	18%
6. Encourage parent involvement	40	16%

The strategy reported most frequently by teachers (126, 51 percent) for communicating early childhood philosophy to children's parents was to use planned

parent meetings, information sessions and special days as a forum for communicating aspects of early childhood education. For example:

I explained by philosophy at the beginning of the year by holding a meeting with interested parents. During that time, I also explained the reasons for my daily routines and how parents could assist with their children's learning, reaching their full potential (9:c.2).

Regular concerts to show off children's work and let them perform for an audience. This occasion is an opportunity for public relations and a short talk about outcomes achieved by this unit of work (89:c.2).

Have parents in your centre so they can see what you do. Parent interviews /evenings with videos, photos etc. (223:c.2).

Get [parents] to do an activity in pairs – one person writes down the skills they are developing /using during the activity (264:c.2).

The second most frequently cited strategy (116, 47 percent) was to communicate early childhood philosophy through written materials such as newsletters and information booklets, and through displays of printed matter around the room. Included in responses were 37 teachers who suggested the strategy of displaying charts of outcomes in the learning areas, five who advocated a parent library in the centre, and four who distributed parenting leaflets from other sources. Examples of comments about strategies were:

Information re play and its importance sent home (28:c.2).

Pass on articles. Newsletters. Notice board (46:c.2).

Term newsletters where I outline my program and my objectives for the children (62:c.2).

Detailed parent handbook, [daily work pad] displayed list of things we may do for the day. Detailed documentation (photos, audio tapes, displays showing program (72:c.2).

Letters home...Posters on walls explaining value of learning centres (75:c.2).

Frequent newsletters throughout the year (127:c.2).

We need more publications like the book 'What is good early childhood education (EDWA book) that we can photocopy sheets and give us simple outlines that we can use to explain principles of ECE (146:d).

The third most frequently cited strategy (92, 37 percent) was communicating their philosophy through children's work samples and portfolios. For example:

Portfolios with necessary explanations and photos. Living the belief that play is learning and valuing this at all times (61:c.2).

Class open evening. Displays in foyer...Show children's work – using a portfolio to illustrate the children's progress and the steps taken (82:c.2).

Newsletters about projects. Large displays of children's projects – showing and documenting from start to finish. Children inviting parents in at the end of a project to launch, celebrate or view project work with children doing a lot of the explanations (122:c.2).

The fourth strategy reported by teachers (78, 31 percent) was to communicate their philosophy during parent-teacher interviews. Examples of comments were:

Inviting parents for an informal interview and chatting to them about my child centred way of teaching (32:c.2).

Parent interviews (107:c.2).

Twice a year parent interviews when we discuss their child's work. An orientation introduction meeting at beginning of year (146:c.2).

Communicating early childhood philosophy through informal discussions with parents (45, 18 percent) was the fifth strategy reported by teachers. For example:

Informal chats – teaching in front of them. Showing them children's work and portfolios (23:c.2).

Casually at drop off /pick up times. Socially – in small communities wee parents out of school (78:c.2).

Communicate constantly through interviews, portfolios, while on roster, incidental conversations (162:c.2).

Informal – ongoing communication (244:c.2).

The sixth strategy reported by teachers (40, 16 percent) was to encourage parents to be involved in their child's early education. Included in this cluster were responses from 17 teachers that emphasised the importance of having an open door policy to aid communication with parents. Examples of comments were:

Encourage them to visit and come on duty and observe all the learning that is going on in the children's activities (14:c.2).

Parent meetings. Parent interviews. Lots of parent involvement eg. teddy bears' picnic, mothers' day afternoon tea, fathers' night (37:c.2).

Inviting parents in for roster duties, an informal getting to know you morning tea – obstacle courses etc. By physically involving parents in

the program, such as a parent playing an instrument works well (81:c.2).

Open classroom policy – parents welcome to come in, share skills with us – I value their input. Respect parent values (122:c.2).

Encourage parents to take a role in becoming a team in child's education (191:c.2).

Nine responses highlighted two other strategies for communicating early childhood philosophy to parents. Four teachers reported it was important not to use educational jargon in communications with parents. For example:

Use everyday language. Relate experiences to help understanding (73:c.2).

Five teachers cited the strategy of referring to recent research documents to pass on to parents or to support their philosophy. For example:

Relating all comments to latest research or my past teaching experience and /or to other professional people - psychologists, speech pathologist etc (102:c.2).

In summary, the strategy cited most by teachers was to use parent meetings, information sessions and special days to communicate early childhood philosophy to parents. Following this, was the strategy to use written materials in the form of newsletters, displays and notice boards, and the strategy of communicating early childhood philosophy through samples of children's work, some of which are collated in portfolios with accompanying explanations. In addition, teachers reported that their philosophy could be communicated to parents through parent-teacher interviews and informal discussions. Each of these strategies emanates from inherent expectations of early childhood programs. However, the degree to which each opportunity exists within the program, and the degree to which each is grasped to communicate early childhood philosophy, would be influenced by various factors, some of which have been highlighted in this chapter. The sixth strategy reported by teachers was to encourage parent involvement. This strategy underpins all previous strategies, as participation of parents in the program provides more of the above opportunities for teachers to communicate their philosophy.

## Strategies for communicating philosophy to other teachers

Teachers reported seven clusters of strategies they use to communicate their philosophy to other teachers in the school. These are summarised in Table 10.3.

Table 10.3

### Strategies for communicating with other teachers

Strategy	Number of teachers	Percentage
1. Informal discussions	72	29%
2. Combine /share activities /resources	72	29%
3. Involve self in whole school activities /planning	72	29%
4. Visits /invitations to preprimary	51	21%
5. Portfolios /display children's work in school	34	14%
6. Good relations /rapport	17	7%
7. Assertiveness	5	2%

The first three strategies in Table 12 were cited by equal numbers of early childhood teachers (72, 29 percent) as ways to communicate their philosophy to other teachers in the school. The first strategy was to communicate early childhood philosophy through informal discussions with other teachers. Examples of comments were:

Grab the moment in conversations and when [other teachers] comment on work in the classroom or [work of] a child (4:c.3).

Talking over morning tea (37:c.3).

Casual discussions in staff room (64:c.3).

Casual conversation – lunch time, after school, in class (114:c.3).

The second strategy to communicate early childhood philosophy to other teachers in the school was to combine or share activities and resources. Included in this cluster were 21 responses that suggested sharing information with other teachers, 15 responses that suggested attending professional development in early childhood education with other teachers, and 12 that reported buddy systems to be an effective



means of imparting aspects of early childhood philosophy. Examples of comments included:

Comparison of programs, buddy classroom, invitations or welcome to the centre, share resources and ideas (45:c.3).

Doing relevant Professional development that we may attend together...group meetings before school on a Friday where teachers meet informally in staff room to share ideas (75:c.3).

Share relevant articles and resources. Chat when possible – informally and through collaborative planning sessions (109:c.3).

Raise their consciousness whenever possible. Leave material for staff room reading and professional development. Be visible when ever (127:c.3).

Share results of any professional development, literature /gather with colleagues (211:c.3).

Seeing how the program is run within the centre. Meetings with junior primary staff to share program. Buddy systems with children from the school, sharing reading materials /photographs and observations (261:b.3).

The third strategy cited by equal numbers of teachers was to ensure early childhood teachers were involved in whole school planning and activities. Included in this cluster were 26 responses that highlighted the importance of early childhood teachers being vocal in school staff meetings, 17 responses that reported the necessity to be involved in school decision making, and 15 responses that recommended talking in Curriculum Framework terms when talking about early childhood philosophy. Examples of comments included:

Attending all staff meetings and Curriculum Improvement Planning meetings and involving myself in decision-making (25:c.3).

Have children join in whole school activities whenever possible (82:c.3).

Treat them as respected colleagues. Speak up at meetings. Be prepared to take responsibility for school based tasks (118:a.3).

Take up leadership roles. Always put the early childhood viewpoint at planning or other meetings. Take any opportunity to express early childhood philosophy (134:c.3).

Making myself known and valued as an important member of staff. Including myself in meetings and putting my opinions forward so I am included in planning etc (191:c.3).

With the introduction of the Curriculum Framework and the cross-curricular approach, this is a perfect way to explain early childhood philosophy and we are one step ahead! (157:d).

One further response in this cluster commented on the experience of being involved in action research with other teachers in the school. This activity provided opportunities for expressing aspects of early childhood philosophy and the respondent found the experience to be 'equalising' (159:c.3).

The fourth cluster of strategies cited by teachers (51, 21 percent) was to encourage other teachers from the school to visit the preprimary room. Included in this cluster were three responses that cited having other teachers in the school doing relief teaching or lunch duty in the preprimary helped communicate the philosophy. Examples of comments were:

Doing internal relief – class swapping – we are good at going up but most teachers have a lot more respect for you after half day doing preprimary (55:c.3).

Other teachers do part of my lunch time duty twice a week. It's often an eye opener for them to chat with the children and to see the layout of the room and the quality of the work. The problem is no time to visit other classrooms (81:c.3).

Talking, sharing and inviting into room (59:c.3).

Invite staff to a morning tea in our centre. When they look around and view work they ask questions which I am delighted to answer (89:c.3).

Modelling different techniques and having an open door to my classroom for them to visit at anytime (258:c.3).

The fifth strategy reported by teachers (34, 14 percent) was to communicate early childhood philosophy through displaying children's work and sharing their portfolios. For example:

Displays of work – foyer and library. Have children take their work to show other classes. Have children join in whole school activities where ever possible (82:c.3).

Guided tours, focus points on displayed work (160:c.3).

Show children's work (182:c.3).

Sharing portfolios (224:c.3).

The sixth cluster of strategies highlighted by early childhood teachers (17, 7 percent) centred around developing good relations with other teachers in the school, in order to impart aspects of early childhood philosophy. Included in this cluster were four responses that suggested the strategy of respecting and showing an interest in other teachers' activities. Examples of comments were:

Mixing with staff in staff room (44:a.3).

Showing an interest in what other teachers are doing in their classrooms and relating it to what I'm doing (152:c.3).

Mutual respect and understanding. Friendly open nature. Willingness to share and talk about ideas (186:a.3).

Rapport with peers in staff room, at meetings and social gatherings (191:a.3).

Talking to them about their program and interesting activities and programs they run (217:c.3).

The seventh cluster of strategies reported by teachers (5, 2 percent) was being assertive and harnessing every opportunity presented in order to communicate early childhood philosophy. For example:

Use any opportunity that presents itself without being overbearing or boring (87:c.3).

Tell them what we are doing – even if they don't ask (223:a.3).

Speak on same level i.e. don't take on an inferior role and it won't stick (73:c.3).

Six teachers expressed difficulty in communicating early childhood philosophy to other teachers when asked to report the strategies they used. Indeed, some felt helpless in this area or resentment towards other teachers. For example:

I get stuck here! (138:c.3).

Other teachers are not worth wasting my breath on – after 10 years of their negative influence, I wouldn't waste my time and energy on them (204:c.3).

I haven't managed to do this very well so far (223:c.3).

I don't try (251:c.3).

In summary, the top three strategies cited by early childhood teachers were to communicate their philosophy to other teachers in the school through informal discussions, sharing activities and resources, and involving the preprimary in whole

school activities and planning. Other strategies were to display children's work around the room and invite their primary colleagues to the preprimary room. Further strategies highlighted by some teachers were to establish good relations with other teachers in the school and to be assertive in harnessing opportunities for communicating early childhood philosophy to other staff in the school. The majority of strategies suggested by teachers to communicate their philosophy to other teachers involve interpersonal skills and collaborative opportunities. Similarly, examination of the strategies suggested by teachers across the cases (communicating philosophy to the principal, children's parents and other teachers in the school) reveals that the majority involve the use of interpersonal skills. The importance of teachers possessing appropriate interpersonal skills is highlighted in the literature (Bloom & Sheerer, 1992; Rodd, 1987)) and in the present situation, it follows that if teachers are to succeed in implementing these strategies, then they need to make effective use of appropriate interpersonal skills.

## **CHAPTER ELEVEN**

### **DATA ANALYSIS: SECTION C (PART D)**

#### **Teachers' views of leadership**

The final open-ended question in the questionnaire sought further comments from respondents on leadership with regard to explaining early childhood philosophy. A total of 108 early childhood teachers responded to this section of the questionnaire. Responses were grouped initially into eighteen clusters with some responses, by nature of their content, categorised into more than one cluster. Further analysis involving rereading and attempting to form meta-clusters which enabled the data to be displayed in three main interlocking clusters. That is, teachers' responses were able to be categorised according to three general, but connected aspects of leadership in communicating early childhood philosophy in school settings. These aspects, along with the number of responses from teachers, are displayed in Figure 11. The data for Figure 11 was sourced from 108 teachers' responses to Section C (Part D) of the questionnaire. It should be noted that the sum of teachers in Figure 11 is greater than the 108 as six teachers raised more than one issue in their response.

The first aspect relates to the context of early childhood education within the school setting and the second aspect encompasses issues that may arise as a result of the context, and with regard to, leadership in early childhood education within a school. Interlocking with the context and issues of leadership in early childhood education is the third aspect, forms of action. Among teachers' responses were suggested strategies and action that some teachers believed were essential if the early childhood way of teaching was to be valued or upheld within school settings.

#### **Context**

The context of leadership in early childhood education within a school setting incorporated five groups of responses from teachers. The first group highlighted the

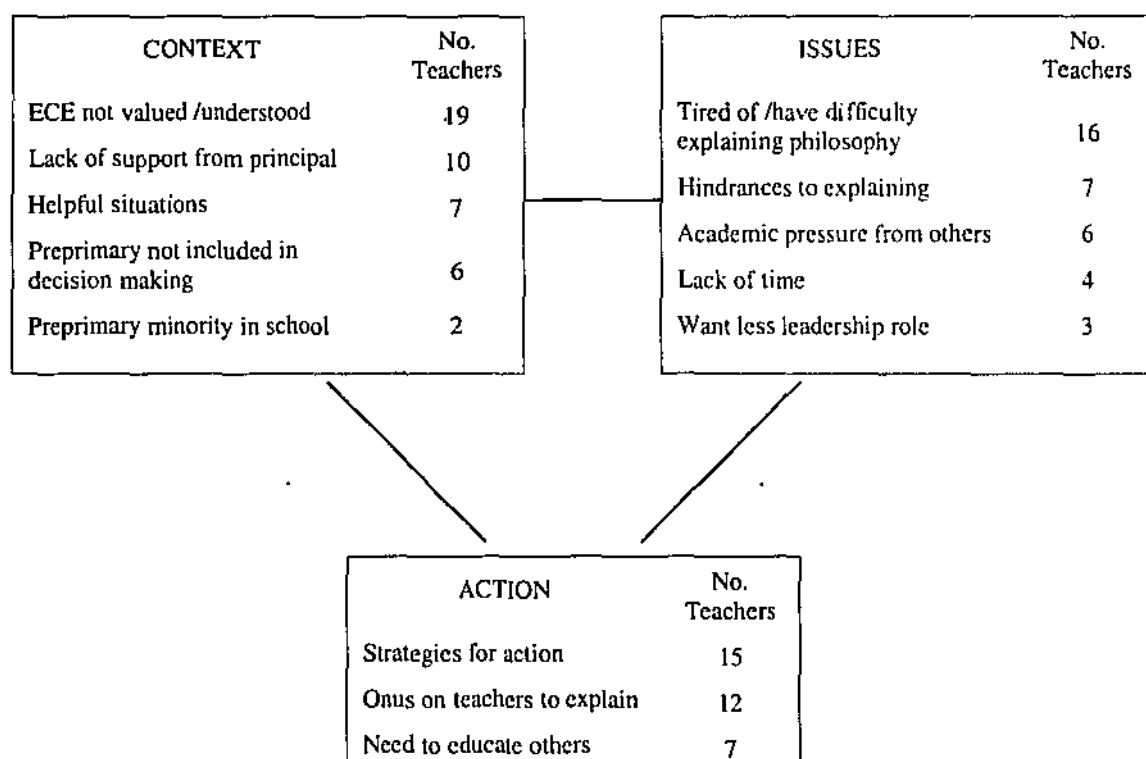
situation that early childhood education was not valued or understood by others.

Examples of comments were:

Although inroads have been made into making preprimary part of the whole school environment it has not been achieved totally. Preprimary is often only included after careful consideration, staff are not able to visit staff room as often as other staff where important information is sometimes discussed. Preprimaries are often last to get resources, especially technology. Preprimary is not called a teaching area (eg. at this school all 'teaching areas' have the internet and new computers – the preprimary does not (44:d).

Preprimary appears to be viewed as a 'tolerated' rather than a valuable part of the school. We are not considered an asset or selling point when attempting to advertise the school's 'assets'. It appears that ECE teachers are considered less valuable or worthy within a school's teaching staff (103:d).

Teachers who undermine our leadership in the school because our programs aren't viewed as important as upper grade school learning programs (114:d).



**Figure 11:** Summary of comments about leadership with regard to explaining early childhood philosophy.

Source of information: Early Childhood Teachers' (n = 108) responses to Section C of the questionnaire.

The second group of responses focussed on the lack of support from the principal for early childhood education. Examples of comments were:

I feel leadership is something observed in one who leads by example. I am very tired of seeing people who enjoy leadership roles and who give little time to their primary clientele – the students and their secondary clientele- the parents (53:d).

Leadership in the true sense leaves many people feeling threatened if they are insecure about their own leadership eg. principals. Unfortunately a different philosophy can be seen as cumbersome and unworkable, creating inconveniences and unnecessary work (138:d).

The importance of ECE in all schooling needs to be reflected [on] and understood in the administration, especially the principal. It is difficult to give support to something you don't understand or hold in high regard (160:d).

The third group of responses highlighted helpful situations or contexts that foster communicating early childhood philosophy. For example:

I think because I am in a small school I am valued more, where as if I was in a large school it would be easier to be ignored or hide away (14:d).

I've had more success up North – younger staff and more open minded attitudes than down in the south west with older staff (78:d).

I find that explaining ECE philosophy is not difficult as I am passionate about it, as long as I am given the chance to discuss it and it is valued as an integral part of children's development (116:d).

Where there is more than one [preprimary] centre, I feel a team approach is beneficial. If relevant teachers advocate the same philosophy and work as a team, especially re involving the rest of the school (237:d).

The fourth group of responses concerned the lack of inclusion of preprimary staff in whole-school decision-making. Examples of comments were:

I have always desired to have a [greater] leadership role, however lack of descriptors (knowing what to say) has reduced this. This particular school is happy to keep preprimary 'isolated' even though on school site...A recent example of lack of leadership – I was given the role to design a report for preprimary. I designed a broad range – didn't go through appropriate channels. School council decided on report style – teacher had no input. I couldn't stand up for beliefs as I had no idea what to say! (10:d).

At my current school, the preprimary staff have worked hard to have ECE recognised as an important part of the school and of every

child's education – with varied success. Sometimes we are included and sometimes left out of important decision making, whole school activities etc (85:d).

The school site is one of the main problems for encouraging interaction between teachers' classes. Teachers don't always work well collaboratively, as a whole school or part of school – locked in classrooms. Some teachers have views of ECE as being separate from school! (122:d).

The fifth group of two responses alluded to the problem of communicating one's philosophy when early childhood staff are the minority in a primary school.

One teacher summed the situation in the following way:

When we go to in-service or network meetings we are always told it is up to us to inform parents, principal etc about ECE but when we get back to school it is very difficult as it is overridden by all philosophies, discussions relating to primary education. It gets very frustrating as it all boils down to money, especially in our school (19:d).

## Issues

The next aspect of leadership in early childhood education is comprised of a group of five issues that arise with regard to explaining early childhood philosophy to others as a result of, or within, the context of the school setting. The first group of responses report that teachers experience difficulty explaining their philosophy, are tired of explaining, or don't see any need to do so. For example:

It seems that the vast majority of teachers /principals have the idea that preprimary is filling in time until real school starts. Preprimary always seems to be forgotten for lots of things, but as soon as the school needs money – the preprimary is suddenly included. I get tired of constantly justifying what I do and [explaining] that it is important and that it is not easy which is what most people seem to think! (36:d).

I feel wholehearted commitment to ECE philosophy, employing ECE trained teachers up to year three with an awareness of contemporary practice would lead by example and promote philosophy in action. Talking about it does not necessarily convince others, though it may be a starting point. On my part the constant need to be 'pushy' does not always suit and it's easier to preach to those willing to be converted (58:d).



I have found it very difficult during my long teaching career to impart this philosophy as not many sectors in the community are interested (150:d).

I rarely get asked to explain ECE philosophy. Nobody wants to know it, they just want happy, content children (218:d).

The second issue comprised responses that alluded to hindrances to communicating early childhood philosophy. Examples of comments were:

Having come from 7 years off-site doing everything from controlling cleaners, gardeners, aides, concerts, inventories, busy bees, parent committees, to 3 years in classrooms – just another classroom – teachers seen but not heard. I used to whinge about the isolation off-site but there is a worse isolation that's in a crowded room. Our autonomy was our strength, our integration is our weakness now (55:d).

It is difficult to get the message across as mostly other teachers interpret what is being said according to their own experience or teaching philosophy. As it sounds similar /same they agree. It is when philosophy becomes practice that the differences appear clear and therefore the message is lost again (106:d).

There seems to be a huge gap between ECE philosophy and primary teaching philosophy. Primary teachers generally don't seem to give ECE much credibility. Personally, I can do it, but I'm lousy at explaining it! (153:d).

Our employer doesn't support us. The economic environment is also dollar outcomes based instead of valuing children. We can only appeal to the audience /clients /voters at hand when we have their children. Full-time preprimary has also affected our contact with parents (239:d).

The third issue encompassed early childhood teachers' responses that highlighted their concern with the 'academic push' on the play-based early childhood program from other sources. Examples of comments were:

I have concerns that ECE is getting too structured with full-time. Too many pressures are around for reading and writing and computers instead of developing gross and fine motor skills and hands on. I would rather have six children in a group playing a game than one to one on a computer seeing a screen rather than 3-D (32:d).

No one is prepared to listen. Even if they do they ignore the issues. My particular issue – push down of formality and greater expectations of preprimary children. When five full days begin, preprimary will soon become as year one unless we all unite and speak up! (97:d).

Many other teachers in the district are much keener on more formalised learning – focussing on learning letters, and using photocopied worksheets. Unfortunately parents are happy with the sooner is better idea – so resistance has to come from preprimary teachers who believe strongly in the ECE philosophy (115:d).

Responses that comprised the fourth issue focussed on the lack of time available in the working day to impart early childhood philosophy. For example:

To be honest I think everyone is so busy doing their own thing, there isn't the luxury of time to consider much what anyone's philosophy is. It's just assumed and generalised and those assumptions and generalisations are often inadequate (12:d).

The time to discuss philosophy of early childhood education is the biggest problem. It has to be second nature to you to be able to put into any conversation this philosophy and not appear to be 'standing on a soap box' again. People don't like things constantly told to them (50:d).

The fifth issue arose from comments from teachers who wanted less responsibility in the area of leadership in communicating their philosophy. For example:

This year I have been in a position of wanting less responsibility as a leader at the school – I am aiming for more shared leadership next year. I now understand why people keep quiet at meetings! Things can become an avalanche of extra responsibilities that actually take one's focus and energy away from the children (108:d).

I have made a clear and carefully considered choice to be the best possible ECE teacher in practice but limit my involvement in school, advocacy, professional organisations to a level that allows me to enjoy my life and put my energies into my family and other commitments. I have no desire to increase my leadership role in any way – other than being a good example (244:d).

## **Action**

The third aspect of leadership in explaining early childhood philosophy was formed by three groups of responses. The first group focussed on strategies for action that teachers believed necessary in order to communicate their philosophy. Seven of these strategies were concerned with fostering good relations with others and being assertive and confident. Four strategies highlighted the need to keep up-to-date and undertake professional development. Examples of comments were:

I think that more teachers from the early childhood end need to become leaders eg deputy /principal if there is going to be more understanding about ECE (52:d).

Present yourself in a confident, light hearted, broad minded manner, so that people take you seriously and will be prepared to listen – practice what you preach (94:d).

Teachers need to behave like professional educators and not nanny's or child care operatives. In many instances we don't stand up for our rights...Early childhood teachers are their own worst enemy as they often see themselves as (and act like) a mother substitute rather than a university qualified professional...we need to be seen as the same as all other teachers, until this is done we will be thought of as babysitters and on the lowest rung of the leadership ladder (134:d).

ECE teachers should be more vocal about [developmentally appropriate practice]. ECE teachers should review practice frequently – there are still old practices around...enormous benefit in keeping up to date with what goes on and what's new (130:d).

ECE teachers need to be confident about what they teach – people will question what they do (236:d).

The second group of responses about action emphasised that the onus of advocating and explaining early childhood philosophy rested with early childhood teachers. Examples of comments were:

It is very challenging to overcome the preconceived ideas held by the principal and other teachers that K /P isn't just play and filling in time until the child begins 'real' learning with them! I think it's a matter of voicing ECE philosophy at every opportunity. The push for formal reporting from the principal with achievement levels so they can be put on a school profile means he has 'blinkers on' if it can't be measured in achievements of 1 to 5. As ECE teachers, somehow, we have to explain how inappropriate such practice is until it registers. It's our responsibility (4:d).

To promote ECE – developmental learning, activity based learning etc, collaborative, cooperative teaching /planning must be a focus. As ECE people are usually leaders in this they need to take a leadership role across the whole school if possible. In this way they can explain their philosophies (61:d).

It is essential to be proactive and constantly reinforce the message of the value of play and the importance of ECE. It's also important to take an active role in curriculum implementation in the whole school, to establish oneself as a leader in the ECE field (76:d).

It is vital that we band together to voice the needs of ECE otherwise government and departmental decisions will be made without consultation from working practitioners (189:d).

I think preprimary teachers have to make an extra effort to be heard in the school and they should fight to be included in school things. It's not easy! (243:d).

The third form of action suggested by teachers was the need to educate others about the early childhood way of teaching. Examples of comments were:

Until there is acceptance of the pivotal role we play in education in general and early childhood in particular, mainstream educators will see us as peripheral. Education Department, government, parents and other teachers need to be better informed. We can only do so much (118:d).

I believe it is important that the broad community has a better understanding of our job and the importance to a sound and pleasant introduction to the education system...(140:d).

Need for further 'public high profile' information. Need to work on K/P being seen as 'just play' (211:d).

In proffering further comments about leadership in early childhood education, most respondents have focussed on the context of the preprimary group within the school setting, and the issues that arose from within that context. Comments highlighted the difficulties faced by early childhood teachers in communicating and maintaining their philosophy. However, some teachers also suggested strategies, or action to be taken, to address such issues. Evident within the suggestions is the awareness and strong conviction from those teachers that it is their own responsibility to work towards the redress of issues, or overcome constraints in order to communicate and maintain their early childhood philosophy.

### **Discussion of the findings and directions for follow-up interviews.**

This section is a discussion of findings from the preceding four chapters that presented data from the open-ended questions. The discussion is presented in three main sections 1) Factors that help or hinder communicating early childhood philosophy to others; 2) Strategies early childhood teachers use to communicate their philosophy to others; and 3) Teachers' perceptions of leadership in early childhood education. These sections are directly related to research questions two, three and one respectively. Analysis and discussion provides direction for the follow-up

interviews in Phase Two of the study and, as further questions arise, links are made to the formulation of the interview schedule (see Appendix E).

### **Factors that help or hinder communicating early childhood philosophy to others.**

There are three global factors that teachers reported helped, or hindered them, communicating early childhood philosophy to the principal, children's parents or other teachers in the school. These are 1) Others' level of interest, knowledge or understanding of early childhood education; 2) Early childhood teachers' own level of confidence or interpersonal skills; and 3) The issue of provision or lack of time.

### **Others' lack of interest, knowledge or understanding of early childhood education.**

A prominent factor reported by teachers that helps or hinders them communicating their philosophy to the principal is directly attributed to the principal's leadership style, and knowledge and understanding of early childhood education. If a principal is supportive, interested and has knowledge and understanding of early childhood education, together with a shared or transformational leadership style, then communications are enhanced. Conversely, if the reverse is true with the principal showing a lack of interest and understanding of early childhood education, teachers reported that they experienced difficulty in communicating their philosophy to the principal.

These attributes of support, interest, knowledge and understanding of early childhood education were also prominent influences on the ease with which teachers reported they could communicate their philosophy to children's parents. Teachers reported that if parents lacked knowledge and understanding of early childhood education and did not value or support the program, it was difficult to communicate early childhood philosophy to them. Similarly, these same attributes were reported as a major influence on the ease with which early childhood teachers communicated their philosophy to other teachers in the school.

Closely tied to the level of interest in, or value placed on, early childhood education is the personality or attitude of others. The personality and leadership style of the principal, and the personality and attitude of children's parents and other teachers in the school were reported as factors that could enhance or constrain the

communicating of early childhood philosophy. It was reported that some principals, parents, or other teachers displayed a superior or disinterested attitude and assigned a low priority to early childhood education. If others were not open to or willing to listen and acquire information about early childhood philosophy, then communications were constrained. The lack of knowledge, understanding and value of early childhood education, together with the personality and attitudes of others, is an issue that will be explored in more depth in the follow-up interviews in Phase Two of the study. Several questions arise at this point. For example What experiences have early childhood teachers had with regard to communicating their philosophy to others? and What strategies, if any, do they use to overcome the constraints faced above? In addition, How do teachers think we can best educate others about the early childhood way of teaching? The answers to these questions are sought through questions 8, 9, 10 and 11 from the interview schedule in Appendix E.

### **Teachers' own level of confidence and interpersonal skills.**

Another reported influence that was common to communicating early childhood philosophy to the principal, children's parents, and other teachers in the school was the early childhood teacher's own level of confidence and interpersonal skills. Teachers reported that their interpersonal skills and confidence, boosted by their training, experience and a belief in early childhood philosophy, helped them communicate it to others. Conversely, some teachers reported their lack of confidence was a hindrance to communicating their philosophy. It is interesting to note that more than twice as many teachers reported their level of confidence and interpersonal skills to be a factor that helped them communicate their philosophy to others than did teachers who reported that their lack of confidence and interpersonal skills were a hindrance.

This finding is at odds with the overarching finding of the Early Childhood Teacher Leadership Scale which indicates teachers would ideally like to have more developed leadership skills than they actually possess and enact. If one is to accept the inference that the level of professional confidence and interpersonal skills influence the degree to which teachers enact leadership in the school setting (Chemers, Watson & May, 2000; Rodd, 1987; Pajares, 1996), then it is curious as to

why more teachers did not cite their own level of confidence or interpersonal skill as a constraint to communicating their philosophy to others. This situation leads to the questions, What importance do teachers place on leadership skills and interpersonal skills in their work context? In what situations do teachers feel confident or lack confidence? How can teachers' confidence be increased? What is needed in professional development or teacher training to develop leadership skills? The answers to these questions are sought through questions 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 16, 17 and 18 from the interview schedule in Appendix E.

### **Time and opportunities for communicating philosophy.**

The issue of time was also reported as an influence common to communicating early childhood philosophy to the principal, children's parents, and other teachers in the school. The lack of time in the working day for collaboration and opportunities to communicate early childhood philosophy to others was reported as a hindrance. In the same vein, teachers reported that it is helpful if they are provided with time and opportunities within their working day to collaborate and communicate their philosophy to others. It was acknowledged however, that little opportunity is available within the existing context or structure of the education system. This finding is consistent with other research (Barth, 2001; Firestone, 1996; Hargreaves, 1992; Stone, Horejs, & Lomas, 1997; Wasley, 1991) and leads to further questions such as How, if at all, does the issue of time impact on early childhood teachers? Do early childhood teachers see any way to overcome time constraints in their work context? The answers to these questions are sought through questions 12 and 13 from the interview schedule in Appendix E.

### **Strategies early childhood teachers use to communicate their philosophy to others.**

Common to the situation of communicating early childhood philosophy to the principal, children's parents and other teachers in the school, was the global strategy that encompassed making or seizing opportunities to communicate the philosophy at planned and unplanned, and formal and informal, situations. Such situations included planned and incidental discussions; formal information sessions; encouraging involvement in the early childhood program; planning for collaborative activity; and ensuring inclusion of the early childhood program in whole school

activities and decision making. Each of the strategies suggested by the early childhood teachers involve the use of interpersonal skills and require a degree of confidence and a sense of being proactive. Thus in order to implement these strategies effectively, teachers must possess these skills and attributes.

Although some teachers have suggested these strategies, it is evident from the findings of Section B of the questionnaire that in general, early childhood practitioners find it difficult to implement such strategies and would like to perform better in some of these areas. For example, items 17 - *I am proactive rather than reactive (initiating rather than responding)*, 91 - *I am confident to explain to the principal about the early childhood way of teaching*, and 119 - *I make sure I am included in school decision making* (see Appendix B) are representative of some strategies suggested by teachers. However, for each of these items teachers indicated that they find it 'hard' to say they enacted these aspects of leadership. This situation leads to further questions such as Which strategies do teachers find most successful for communicating their philosophy to others? and Which strategies do they prefer or feel most confident to use? In addition, To what degree do teachers believe their interpersonal skills influence how well they are able to communicate their philosophy? The answers to these questions are sought through questions 3 and 4 from the interview schedule in Appendix E.

### **Teachers' perceptions of leadership in early childhood education.**

The majority of comments from teachers about the issue of leadership in early childhood education focussed on the context of preprimary grades within the school setting and the issues that arose as a result of the context. The context is described by the majority of teachers who responded to this section as one in which early childhood education is the minority and not valued or understood, with a lack of support from the principal and lack of inclusion in school decision making. Issues that arose from within the context were identified as weariness in explaining or justifying early childhood philosophy; a lack of time; resisting academic pressures on the curriculum; a great divide between philosophies of primary and early childhood education; and the economic focus of education not supporting quality early childhood programs.



The general indication from teachers who responded to this section was that they worked in a context that did not support or value early childhood education. Teachers reported situations and issues that placed constraints on their ability to communicate early childhood philosophy to others in the school setting. Despite this, some teachers noted elements within the context, such as open-minded staff and support from other preprimary colleagues, that can be helpful in communicating early childhood philosophy. In addition, several teachers suggested strategies for overcoming contextual constraints, believing there was a need to educate others and that the onus was on early childhood teachers to explain their way of teaching to others. It seems that, in some teachers' views, they work in a context that is generally not supportive of early childhood education and they are subsequently tired of justifying or explaining their philosophy. Other teachers, however, acknowledge that it is their responsibility to explain and communicate to others, the early childhood way of teaching. Given this situation, there is a need to investigate in more depth, the perceptions and experiences of early childhood teachers with regard to leadership in this area. Among the questions that arise are What situations lead to teachers becoming tired of explaining their philosophy? and Do teachers feel that it is important to communicate their philosophy? The answers to these questions are sought through questions 14, 15 and 20 from the interview schedule in Appendix E.

The previous four chapters have presented the findings of the open-ended questions from Section C of the questionnaire. Analysis of the findings and consideration of these in conjunction with findings from Section B of the questionnaire have indicated directions for the follow-up interviews in Phase Two of the study (see Appendix E). The next chapter introduces Phase Two of the study.

## **CHAPTER TWELVE**

### **PHASE TWO: INTERVIEW FINDINGS PART A – HOW EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS CONCEPTUALISE THEIR LEADERSHIP ROLES.**

#### **Introduction**

Phase two of the study involved the follow-up interviews and is comprised of four chapters that report and discuss the findings. Chapter 12 (the present chapter) deals with Part A of the findings and investigates how Western Australian early childhood teachers conceptualise their role with regard to leadership. Chapter 13, Part B of the findings, identifies factors that early childhood teachers report enhance or constrain their leadership abilities. Chapter 14, Part C of the findings, examines the strategies that early childhood teachers reported that they use to explain their pedagogy and philosophy to others. Chapter 15 presents a discussion of the findings reported in Chapters 13 and 14. Together, the four chapters (12-15) further address research questions one, two and three respectively, as outlined in Chapter One. Codes are noted at the end of the quotes to enable an audit trail. For example, (4:2) refers to the fourth person interviewed and the response is located within question number two on the audio tape or transcription. The present chapter begins with a description of the number of years teaching experience for the twenty interview participants.

#### **Subjects**

The number of years experience teaching in early childhood education for each of the interview participants ranged from a few months to 23 years (see Table 12.1). The range of teaching experience and mean number of teaching years (9.4 years) for the interviewees is slightly less than the range and mean number of teaching years of the questionnaire respondents (mean 12.5 years). Details of the

process of selection of interview subjects and the procedure followed for the interviews were explained in Chapter five.

Table 12.1

Interview participants' number of years experience teaching in early childhood.

No. years experience	No. of teachers
0	2
1*	1
2	1
3*	1
5*	1
6	1
7	2
8	1
10	2
11	1
13	2
14	1
15	1
20	2
23	1
Total No. teachers	20

\*Interviewees had further years experience teaching children aged 6 to 12 years before acquiring early childhood education qualifications.

**Importance of leadership skills**

In their responses, all of the interview participants reported that they believed leadership skills, such as being assertive, confident and able to articulate their philosophy, were important to their role as teacher. Table 12.2 displays the degree of importance identified from teachers' responses. Teachers were not asked to choose one of these categories when assigning the degree of importance of leadership skills but rather, these categories were elicited from teachers' general responses. If teachers were asked to choose one of the stated categories, their responses may have been different. For example, some teachers may not generally make a distinction between 'extremely important' or 'essential', but when asked to rate leadership skills in one or the other category, a proportion of those who responded in the 'extremely

important' category may have responded in the 'essential' category when confronted with specific choices.

Table 12.2

Teachers perception of importance of leadership skills

Importance of leadership skills	No. teachers	Percent
Essential	1	5%
Very or extremely important	12	60%
Important	7	35%
Total	20	100%

Each of the teachers interviewed referred to the importance of one or more specific leadership skills (such as being assertive, confident and articulate) with regard to their role as teachers. However, it was not possible to isolate the skills identified by teachers and relate them to a particular teaching role. Rather, one leadership skill or a combination of the three, were regarded by teachers as important for them to play a leadership role in particular situations. As common themes emerged in the situations described by teachers, it was possible to categorise them into four roles: 1) communicate philosophy to others; 2) state /justify own view; 3) ensure inclusion in whole school planning; and 4) resist pressure from others for inappropriate practice (see Table 12.3).

Table 12.3

Roles identified by teachers as being influenced by leadership skills.

Role	No. teachers	Percent
1. To communicate philosophy to others	18	90%
2. To state /justify view	9	45%
3. To ensure inclusion in whole school planning	6	45%
4. To resist pressure for inappropriate practice	5	25%

It should be noted that the source for the information in the tables presented in this chapter is from the interviews with 20 early childhood teachers. Each table may contain a sum that exceeds or falls short of a total of 20 teachers or 100 percent for two reasons. The first reason is that some teachers included more than one factor within their responses, and thus were assigned to more than one category, resulting in the total number of teachers being greater than 20. The second reason is that some teachers did not respond to particular questions, or the meaning of their response was not clear, which resulted in the total number of teachers being less than 20.

The role identified most frequently by 90 percent of the teachers interviewed, was the need to communicate early childhood philosophy to others. Typical statements were:

A lot of people don't understand your philosophy and you really need to teach them how it works for you (4:2).

Articulating your philosophy is very important when you come up against people who are primary trained and think differently (11:2).

You have to be able to explain very clearly to parents where you are coming from (16:2).

Another role identified by nine teachers was to state or justify one's point of view. Examples of comments were:

If we are going to be taken seriously, then we need to be able to put our view forward and state our case (2:2).

It can be hard because no one really wants to hear from you if it's not relevant for everyone (4:2).

When you are receiving criticism from other staff members...it's very important to be able to articulate the reasons for why you are doing things (15:2).

Ensuring preprimary staff is included in school planning and decision making was also highlighted by six interviewees as a role requiring leadership skills. For example:

[Leadership skills are] very important now it's whole school considerations. If the school is going to consider the ECE area as far as budgeting, school plans and development, it's important they understand what's happening and why it's happening (3:2).

Being part of the whole school decision making and planning is important and I think it's important we say our piece and not just sit back (7:3).

With the Curriculum Framework approach, I think we have a lot to offer and now is the time to have the confidence to have our say (8:2).

Five teachers viewed leadership skills as important to the role of resisting pressure for inappropriate practice. For example:

If you can't tell people about what you're doing and why, then you might end up being the sort of teacher...you wouldn't have wanted to be when you first started out as doing things the...developmentally appropriate way. For example more worksheets or school readiness that parents or principals want to see (9:2).

In our school it was decided to focus on English...writing. You can imagine how appropriate that is for preprimary...it was difficult to stand up in front of the staff and say 'er well, no..um' (10:2).

There seems to be an inconsistency between early childhood and primary trained teachers in terms of what is good early childhood practice [and we need to be] able to articulate that and work with that in a professional way (18:2).

The 20 teachers interviewed perceived leadership skills to be important to their role as teacher and viewed leadership in early childhood education as necessary in order to: communicate their philosophy to others; state or justify their views; ensure inclusion in school decision making; and to resist pressure from others for inappropriate practice.

### **Importance of communicating philosophy**

The early childhood teachers reported varied perceptions and experiences of justifying or explaining their philosophy to others. Four teachers stated that they couldn't be bothered, or were tired of explaining, or justifying their philosophy. For example:

You do get sick of not so much explaining but defending my philosophy to people who think you're a babysitter (5:14).

I guess I don't bother justifying my philosophy. I'm not going to thrust my thoughts on someone else when they don't want it (7:14).

I get a bit tired of it – with students and a new graduate next door, you're constantly going over that stuff and I think you just get worn out (12:14).

Seven teachers emphasised the necessity or importance of being proactive and continuing to explain or justify their philosophy. Some commented:

If you're passionate about your profession, it's important you just keep going and find different strategies that work...You justify it because people don't understand what you are doing (3:14).

I think you just need to be promoting [your philosophy] all of the time otherwise they forget that you're there (4:14).

Being an advocate for ECE shouldn't just be when things are going bad, or there's a big issue. We have to constantly do it all of the time...Prevention is better than cure (20:14).

On the other hand, eight interviewees mentioned they could understand how other teachers reported they were tired of explaining or justifying their philosophy.

Among the comments were:

I think you would feel very often that you were bashing your head against a brick wall and just get on with your job (2:14).

I can really understand why early childhood teachers distance themselves from the school and are just happy to stay there (8:14).

In a school where you don't have the support at the top and others disregard totally what you say, it would be very hard. I have seen some preprimaries form their little click and shut themselves off from the school – probably in response to the fact they've had to do all this battling and they're tired of it (10:14).

From another perspective, nine teachers stated that, in practice, they never or rarely experienced the need to explain or justify their philosophy. Two of these, cited the reason was their status as new graduates. One teacher commented:

I haven't really had to talk about it. I haven't developed in that area yet as I've only been out a few months (6:14).

Other comments from teachers were:

I haven't had to justify my philosophy...no one hassles me about that (13:14).

I haven't had much cause to explain or justify my philosophy (14:14).

I haven't really had anyone ask me to explain or really had anyone put me on the spot so to speak (17:14).

Ten (50 percent) of the twenty teachers reported they were not tired of explaining or justifying their philosophy. Five of these stated they were not tired of communicating their philosophy because they had not needed to do so. Among the comments were:

I'm not tired of it. I think it's really important but I've not had to do it a lot (11:14).

Being new to the profession, I'm fairly optimistic I can do something in that area (2:14).

I still enjoy telling people about why we do things because early childhood philosophy is grounded in good ideas of how children develop well (9:14).

One teacher reflected on the issue of weariness from another perspective with the explanation:

I don't think I've got tired yet but...a bit frustrated or a bit fed up...a bit disappointed. Early childhood has been a part of the school for a long time now. We've got the documents to show what is good early childhood practice but you've still got to justify to other teachers. The department tells us what to do as good practice but it is taking it away in another breath with expectations like reporting (18:14).

Table 12.4 presents a summary of teachers' perceptions or experiences of explaining or justifying their philosophy to others.

Table 12.4

Teachers' perceptions /experiences of explaining /justifying their philosophy to others.

Perception /experience	No. teachers	Percent
1. Tired /can't be bothered to explain/justify	4	20%
2. A need to explain /justify	7	35%
3. Understand others' tiredness	8	40%
4. Rare need to explain	9	45%
5. Tired /can't be bothered to explain/justify	4	20%

Within their responses, some teachers made further observations that were personally reflective, with respect to their own abilities. They commented:

At this school, from day one parents have wanted me to justify what I was doing so I've had to go back and reflect from the beginning why I'm doing something and be able to articulate to professionals...and through practice, I've become better (3:14).



I think I'm becoming better at articulating it because more network meetings are happening and early childhood teachers are talking more about their philosophy and it's getting easier to talk about it (17:14).

I suppose it's not until recently that I've probably got tougher and more vocal at meetings than I used to be ...I've spent quite a few years trying to be nice about it (18:14).

These teachers reported that their experience and practice at articulating and communicating early childhood philosophy has helped them become more adept at it. However, it must also be noted that not all teachers reported that experience and practice has helped them become better at articulating early childhood philosophy. This issue is discussed further in the following chapters.

### **Ideal and real perceptions**

Inconsistencies emerged in teachers' responses with regard to the importance and necessity of explaining and communicating their philosophy. The twenty teachers agreed leadership skills were necessary in order to communicate their philosophy to others, and to take a stand on important issues. Similarly, when asked what they thought about some teachers perceiving no need to communicate their philosophy, all of the twenty teachers interviewed agreed there was a need. However, this is in contrast to other responses dealing with their actual experiences in explaining or justifying their philosophy to others. In practice, nine teachers reported they had never or rarely experienced the need to explain or justify their philosophy, while four reported they were tired of or could not be bothered to explain or justify it. It seems this view is a reality for some teachers but when asked to respond to the proposition that some teachers say there is no need to communicate their philosophy, all twenty teachers stated they believed there was a need. This contradiction may indicate that while all teachers agree in theory (or ideally) that there is a need to communicate their philosophy, due to constraints, this need may not be realised in practice by all teachers.

Returning to the consensus from teachers of the need to communicate early childhood philosophy, sixteen (60 percent) teachers perceived there is an unqualified need, while four perceived a qualified need. Among the comments from teachers who perceived there is a definite need to communicate their philosophy were:

I think there's a great need to communicate it – without that we are going to go backwards...a lot of play is leaving the classrooms. We could become very formal at our school if we didn't speak up for ourselves (8:15).

Sometimes I think if you don't know anything...or think you know everything about a subject, you won't ask about it...the way the school is ran as a whole, if you want resources or finance, you have to justify why. I'd see that as ongoing. If you disagreed with some of the things happening then it's another reason you have to justify...If people don't need to justify, maybe they aren't taking an active part in the school (3:15).

If it's a staff meeting and it's a whole school issue you're deciding on then you need to make your philosophy known...they might not ask for it but you just have to use your initiative and say, well this is going to blend well for us or it's not and these are the reasons why (17:15).

I'm sure you can go through life without doing it but they learn from us and there's definitely a need for it (20:15).

It is interesting to note that, in essence, most of these teachers emphasised the importance of being proactive in communicating early childhood philosophy. They also suggested that other teachers who perceived there is no need to communicate their philosophy may be passive members of staff with comments such as "maybe they aren't taking an active part in the school" (3:15). The four teachers that perceived there was a qualified need to communicate their philosophy reported that, while they believed it was necessary, they were never or rarely asked about their philosophy, and would communicate it only if they saw a need. Their comments included:

If you can see that someone has obviously got a very wrong idea, there is a need but I don't often come up against that (14:15).

Generally, I wouldn't [communicate my philosophy] unless I felt the need. Certainly at a staff meeting or [professional development] I wouldn't because everyone wants to get out as quickly as possible and I don't want to delay people (7:15).

One may infer from these comments that the four teachers are passive or reactive (rather than proactive) in communicating early childhood philosophy. It is interesting to note that only one of these four teachers reported a lack of confidence in explaining or communicating her philosophy. As three out of the four teachers reported to be confident in this area, it may be the case that these teachers have

become disillusioned and detached as a coping mechanism (Duke, 1994) in response to others' disinterest in, or lack of value placed on, early childhood education.

Further insight into teachers' perceptions of their leadership role with regard to communicating early childhood pedagogy and philosophy can be gained by examining metaphors contained within the responses. For example, many teachers painted images of battle, or even war, when describing the constraints they faced in communicating their philosophy to others. They spoke in terms of: 'lots of forces working against us' (2:20); 'constant battle of situations' (12:7); 'copping a lot more flak' (17:2); 'thrash out things...it's really blown me away' (9:13); 'have to fight...not get sucked in' (7:4); 'fight for something...battled through that year' (12:17); 'had a run-in with the principal' (5:3); 'I was gung-ho and keen to get in there' (4:14); and [support of colleagues] 'gives you ammunition' (2:11). Similar perceptions were also evident within the responses in Section C of the questionnaire (Phase One). For example, 'ECE is very much under threat' (Q139:d) and 'fight to be included in school things' (Q248:d).

As an aside to perceiving themselves in a situation of 'battle or war', many teachers also revealed a sense of frustration or helplessness in their comments. Examples of such expressions include: '[bashing /hitting] your head against a brick wall' (2:14, 12:3); 'trying to keep on top of things' (17:12); 'a bit frustrating' (4:9); 'intimidated...this overtakes your life' (6:5); 'put it in the too hard basket' (14:20); 'there's continual brick walls' (18:2); 'I wouldn't waste my breath' (Q204:d); 'ECE teachers can advocate all they like but they will be dismissed' (Q89:d); 'I get tired of constantly justifying what I do and that it is important' (Q36:d); and 'we can only do so much' (Q118:d). For some teachers, feelings of frustration or helplessness are coupled with a reluctance to communicate their philosophy due to sensitivity to others' views. For example, 'you don't give the impression you are preaching to people' (1:3); 'sometimes you think before you say something just in case you step on someone's toes' (4:2); 'I don't want to delay people' (7:15); 'you don't want to encroach on anyone' (10:13); 'its very hard to encroach on staff meeting time' (13:12); and 'appear to be standing on a soap box...people don't like things constantly told to them' (Q50:d).

Whilst some teachers have expressed a sense of helplessness or reluctance within their situation of battle in communicating early childhood philosophy, other

teachers have expanded their expressions of battle with assertive action. For example, 'speak up loud and clear' (2:20); 'stand up for what you believe in' (2:17); 'stand up and be counted' (7:17); 'shout loud enough so they'll listen' (8:18); 'jumping up and down...digging heels in' (16:8); and 'we need to stand up and be heard' (Q71:d). Some teachers too, indicated that they realise the need for persistence in the arduous task of communicating their philosophy through the use of expressions such as 'keep plugging away' (2:11); 'chipping away' (3:11); and 'keep pushing it, pushing the barrow' (7:20). Hence with regard to communicating their early childhood philosophy, some teachers perceive themselves to be reluctant or helpless participants in a battle, while others see themselves as willing participants prepared to go into battle for what they believe in.

Viewed in light of the findings from Phase One of the study, one may infer that the number of teachers who were proactive and prepared to 'do battle' in the name of advocacy would be the minority. For example, in Phase One of the study, teachers reported that they found it 'hard' to say that they take a leadership role, or that they encourage the principal to support their early childhood philosophy. Teachers reported that they found it 'hard' to say they were confident public speakers about early childhood education and that they made sure they were included in school decision-making. They also found it 'hard' to say that they tell the principal about their early childhood philosophy, or that they help the principal to acquire more knowledge about early childhood education. Thus it is hard to imagine that these same teachers would find it easy to be proactive in advocating for early childhood education and appropriate programs.

This chapter has investigated the experiences and related perceptions held by 20 early childhood teachers towards leadership in early childhood education, and addressed research question one. The findings indicate that the teachers agreed that leadership skills such as being confident, assertive and possessing the skills to articulate and communicate early childhood philosophy are important to their role as teacher. The teachers also agreed that there is a need to communicate their philosophy to others. However, it appears that in practice, some teachers may fail to, or experience difficulty in, articulating and communicating their philosophy. This supports the finding from Phase One of the study that early childhood teachers find it easier to hold ideal rather than real views of specific aspects of their leadership.

The next chapter investigates the factors that teachers reported enhance or constrain their leadership abilities with respect to articulating and communicating early childhood philosophy to others.

## **CHAPTER THIRTEEN**

### **PHASE TWO: INTERVIEW FINDINGS PART B – FACTORS THAT ENHANCE OR CONSTRAIN EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS' LEADERSHIP ABILITIES.**

This chapter investigates in greater detail the factors that were highlighted in the open-ended question section of the questionnaire, and in doing so, further addresses research question number two identified at the beginning of the study. That is, What factors do kindergarten /preprimary teachers say enhance or constrain their leadership abilities, in particular, their abilities to articulate and communicate what they know and do as early childhood teachers? Interview respondents explained in greater depth, the factors that either enhanced or constrained their abilities to exercise their leadership roles. These factors are grouped under the following headings: 1) Intrapersonal and interpersonal skills; 2) Professional confidence; 3) Others' understanding and respect; and 4) Time. The findings of teachers' perceptions of these factors are reported in the present chapter and a discussion of the findings is provided in Chapter 15.

The source for the information in the tables presented in this chapter is from the interviews with 20 early childhood teachers. Each table may contain a sum that exceeds or falls short of a total of 20 teachers or 100 percent for two reasons. The first reason is that some teachers included more than one factor within their responses, and thus were assigned to more than one category, resulting in the total number of teachers being greater than 20. The second reason is that some teachers did not respond to particular questions, or the meaning of their response was not clear, which resulted in the total number of teachers being less than 20.

#### **Intrapersonal and interpersonal skills**

The interviewees stated their interpersonal skills influenced their abilities to communicate their philosophy to varying degrees. Most teachers' responses were in terms of rating the skills as 'important' or 'very important', while a few used such

terms as 'a lot' and 'one hundred percent'. For the purpose of forming categories, the terms 'a lot' and 'huge' were classed as 'very important', and the terms 'vital', 'everything' and 'one hundred percent' were classed together as 'essential' (see Table 13.1).

Table 13.1

Importance of interpersonal skills to teachers' abilities to communicate their philosophy.

Importance of interpersonal skills	No. teachers	Percent
Essential	5	25%
Very important	8	40%
Important	7	35%
Total	20	100%

When considering to what degree their personal skills affected how well they communicated their philosophy, teachers tended to provide examples of intrapersonal and interpersonal skills they believed to be important and situations in which these skills were necessary. For example:

When you are feeling more confident you are more likely to interact in a more effective way with people (1:4).

The ability to be able to speak up in any situation is vital if you're going to be able to put forward your philosophy (2:4).

You have to be able to talk to the parents and you have to be approachable...and structure it in ...the right language and simple enough for them to understand (11:4).

Interpersonal skills are very important especially working with parents and outside agencies...At meetings with the school psych, physio and speech therapist...I've had to say 'this is where I'm coming from'...I needed confidence and the ability to put it in to words they would understand (4:4).

It was possible to categorise teachers' views on the intrapersonal and interpersonal skills they believed were important to their role, and the situations in which they viewed these skills to be necessary. A summary of teachers' responses is provided in Table 13.2. The skills viewed as most important by the majority of teachers involved possessing self-confidence (75 percent), and the ability to be

friendly and approachable (40 percent). The situations in which the majority of teachers viewed these intrapersonal and interpersonal skills to be necessary, were when relating to others (65 percent) and when defending or justifying early childhood philosophy or pedagogy (40 percent).

One teacher raised the issue of the varying influence of interpersonal skills depending on with whom you are working. She reflected:

I think my interpersonal skills are good, but if there's some sort of resilience in the early childhood or junior primary section of the school, I don't think my interpersonal skills are very strong (18:4).

Table 13.2

Intra/interpersonal skills viewed as important by teachers and situations in which these skills are necessary.

Intra/interpersonal skills viewed as important	No. teachers	Percent
1. Confident	15	75%
2. Friendly /approachable	9	45%
3. Assertive	3	15%
4. Jargon free language	2	10%
5. Empathy	1	5%
<u>Situations when intra/interpersonal skills are necessary</u>		
1. Relating to others	13	65%
2. Defending /justifying	8	40%
3. Speaking up at meetings	2	10%
4. Dealing with outside agencies	2	10%

One teacher highlighted the importance of sound intrapersonal and interpersonal skills in order to be proactive in advocating for early childhood philosophy and the profession. She commented:

I think we are going to voice our philosophy much more...especially with changes going to occur in the next couple of years. I can see we are going to be more formalised – more like year one. In that case, we're going to have to speak up loud and clear and it's going to be quite difficult with a lot of forces working against us (2:20).



In their responses, two teachers initially indicated they had not really thought about the influence of interpersonal skills. One commented:

Good question. I don't think about it much. I just think about what I want to do and just go for it (10:4).

The other teacher reflected:

I don't really know if my interpersonal skills are good or not (19:4).

Whilst in this instance only two teachers indicated that they had not reflected on their interpersonal skills, a much greater proportion was evident when teachers were asked, at the conclusion of the interview, whether participating in the process had caused them to reflect on issues they would not normally think about in much depth. Eighteen (90 percent) of the twenty teachers reported that participation in the interview had caused them to reflect on some issues they would not normally have thought about. Comments included:

In terms of confidence and leadership in expressing my philosophy, I'm realizing there are deficits there (1:19).

It makes me think about how well you perform in these areas. Some of the questions have made me wonder if I do use every avenue available and put my message across (2:19).

The leadership and the confidence I don't really think about- it just happens or it doesn't (4:19).

You've made me realise that I need to do a bit more work in this area (6:19).

You sort of bowl along week by week and do what you do and you don't stop and think "Am I communicating well with my principal or my parents", so yes it's made me stop and think (14:19).

You think you're fairly confident but in my responses to things I'm not as confident or assertive as I could be (18:19).

I was just thinking I was coasting along fine but haven't really sat down and reflected about it – it's thought provoking (19:19).

Two of the teachers believed the interview had not caused them to reflect on anything new. One of these teachers revealed she had been forced to think about such leadership issues when preparing to speak at a principals' conference.

## Professional confidence

Seven (35 percent) teachers reported that they did not feel confident to talk about their philosophy, while 13 (65 percent) reported they did. Two of these 13 teachers added that they did not feel 'very' or 'super confident'. It was possible to list and categorise factors that teachers attributed to their confidence from the interview responses. These factors were relative to whether teachers rated themselves as confident or not confident to talk about their philosophy (see Tables 13.3 and 13.4). It should be noted that although thirteen teachers reported to be confident to talk about their philosophy, some attributed their confidence to more than one factor, therefore, the sum of teachers is greater than thirteen.

Ten of the 13 teachers attributed their confidence to talk about the early childhood way of teaching to a belief in, or enthusiasm for, their philosophy. For example:

I love it, it's a vocation for me and I think if you're enthusiastic and you ooze it...it's much easier (20:16).

Because I agree with it and it makes sense. I believe it's true so I guess that's why it's easy to say (11:16).

Table 13.3

Factors attributed to teachers confident to articulate their philosophy.

Factor	No. teachers
1. Belief /enthusiasm for philosophy	10
2. Teaching /life experience	6
3. Knowledge	4
4. Ability to articulate	3
5. Personality	3
6. Familiarity	1

Six of the 13 teachers reported it was their teaching and life experience that aided their confidence to talk about their philosophy. Teachers commented:

I'm confident because...I've been teaching for so long and had contact with other professions and had to talk about what I do and why (3:16).

Coming from a teaching family, I grew up with it and this is what I know, it's what my family does and confidence comes from that too (10:16).

Four of the 13 teachers attributed their confidence to knowledge. For example: "My four years ECE training and keeping up with things helps" (4:16). The ability to speak to people and articulate what they believed reportedly made it easy for three teachers to communicate their philosophy. They commented:

I find speaking to people quite easy. I find speaking easier than writing so I think that flows into being able to talk about my philosophy (2:16).

Being reasonable at being able to articulate those things makes it easier (18:16).

Three teachers attributed their confidence to their personality type through such comments as:

You basically are like that or you're not (20:17).

I've always been outgoing, talkative... a confident person and having a high self esteem (16:16).

It's my personality type I think (9:16).

Another factor mentioned by one teacher was that confidence came from teaching in the same school for "so long" and being familiar and comfortable in that environment (3:16).

Not all teachers reported that their experience, knowledge and a belief in early childhood philosophy was enough to boost their confidence. Of the seven teachers who reported that they were not confident in communicating their philosophy, five attributed this to their general lack of self-confidence. Among the comments were:

The more I go through this interview, the more I realise I'm not [confident] (1:16).

At this stage, I don't feel confident (6:16).

I'm not one who steps up and puts my ideas forward readily. I need a bit of encouragement to do that (14:16).

Four of the seven teachers who reported they were not confident, believed a lack of articulation skills influenced their ability to talk about their philosophy. Two commented:

Whilst I know why I'm doing something internally...I'm probably not as good on actually explaining that as I should be – I don't think I've got enough confidence to do that well (1:16).

The proper terms don't just roll off my tongue so I don't find it easy in that respect (13:16).

One teacher also reported that a lack of practice made it difficult to talk about early childhood philosophy. She commented:

I just think you get out of practice and you lose acknowledgment of what you do and what you are able to speak about (12:16).

It should be noted that this teacher highlighted a distinction between experience in terms of the number of years teaching experience and the amount of time actually spent articulating early childhood philosophy. This teacher had 13 years teaching experience yet believed she was less confident to communicate her philosophy now “because of less practice at it and maybe losing the vocabulary that goes with it”. She went on to say:

I've just got on with the job now and after so many years you're just doing what you're doing. I don't consciously think about it I suppose (12:16).

Two teachers pinpointed change in education as a source of influence on their ability to communicate early childhood philosophy. One commented:

I don't feel particularly confident to talk about my philosophy...there's been a lot of changes, there's different expectations on teachers now than when I first started teaching and I think that all tends to erode your confidence (15:16).

Table 13.4 provides a summary of factors that teachers attributed to their lack of confidence in communicating their philosophy. It should be noted that although seven teachers reported to lack confidence in talking about their philosophy, some attributed more than one factor to their lack of confidence, therefore the sum of teachers is greater than seven.

Table 13.4

Factors attributed to teachers not confident to communicate their philosophy.

Factor	No. teachers
1. Lack self-confidence	5
2. Lack articulation skills	4
3. Coping with change	2
4. Lack practice	1

### **Lack of confidence in situations**

The teachers reported various situations at school in which they lacked confidence. A summary is presented in Table 13.5. Three teachers stated that they did not feel they lacked confidence in any situation in their present circumstances. However, two of these teachers mentioned one situation each where they had lacked confidence in a previous school. For example:

When I first started teaching, it coincided with moving on site and there was some antipathy and disparaging remarks like 'they just play' and 'it's a waste of time and resources'...I don't really have any situations where I lack confidence now (19:5).

Four teachers each identified three situations in which they lacked confidence. The first situation was where teachers lacked articulation skills to explain or justify their philosophy. Examples of comments were:

I did my BEd three years ago but it wasn't early childhood based so...I do believe I've lost the skills to verbalise [my early childhood philosophy] (12:5).

I find it really difficult to talk about early childhood by using terminology and normal words that just seem to flow off other people's tongues so easily (13:5).

The second situation identified was when a person in a position of power or authority did not value or support early childhood education. For example, one teacher commented:

I was having problems communicating with the female deputy, the role of preprimary and I felt intimidated by the way she confronted

me and dealt with me...her attitude to me was based purely on the fact I was an ECE teacher (17:5).

This issue of power was also highlighted when two teachers reported that they lack confidence when they are being watched critically. One teacher recounted her experience of:

Being treated like something from Mars with the principal constantly coming in to see what I was doing. The more it happened, the worse my confidence was (7:5).

Table 13.5

Situations at school in which preprimary teachers reported they lacked confidence.

Situation	No teachers
1. Lack articulation to explain /justify	4
2. Person in power /authority doesn't support ECE	4
3. Primary Vs preprimary	4
4. Conflict with parents	3
5. Whole school meetings	3
6. Youth /lack experience	3
7. Under critical observation	2
8. Disparaging comments	2
9. Speaking to large groups	2
10. Caught unawares /unprepared	2
11. In company of articulate people	1
12. Assistant been at school 20 years plus	1
13. Implement change without support	1

The third situation in which teachers reported that they lacked confidence was the perception of a 'them and us' situation, with the primary section of the school versus the preprimary section. One teacher commented:

When there's one of me and eight of them – when you have a vote on something and you might feel strongly about [it] and you'll be the only hand and there's seven voting the other way (8:5).

Three teachers each identified three further situations. The first was in situations of conflict with parents. Included in the comments by teachers were:

I find it very difficult when I have to confront a parent about a problem (16:5).

Some parents don't like what you do...some parents complained to district office that I didn't teach the alphabet (10:5).

In the second situation of whole school meetings, teachers reported they lacked confidence with comments such as:

Those big staff meeting things – I feel totally intimidated (6:5).

I lack confidence in staff meetings when all the information given is years one to seven, like ECE people don't exist (8:5).

In the third situation, youth or lack of experience was highlighted by teachers with comments like:

I feel totally intimidated when you're with other professional people who have been out for 20 years plus and I'm a graduate (6:5).

Disparaging comments made by others about the preprimary section of the school and speaking to large groups were also situations in which two teachers reported they lacked confidence. Another two teachers reported they lacked confidence "When you're caught on the hop or unawares" (2:5). One explained in more detail:

When I was asked to give a rundown of what we were doing... and it was put upon me rather suddenly and I didn't know quite what to say (14:5).

One teacher reported feeling intimidated in the company of articulate people, while another teacher reported that she lacked confidence when beginning to work with an assistant who had been at the school for more than 20 years and very set in her ways. Another teacher also highlighted the situation of implementing change without support with the comment:

I lack confidence when new things are brought in and you don't think you've been given enough time or instruction or in-service on how to work through them (9:5).

## Confidence in situations

Teachers reported various situations in which they felt most confident at school. Table 13.6 presents a summary of these situations. The most common situation in which teachers reported feeling confident was when they received positive feedback, respect and recognition for their efforts. Examples of comments were:

If someone says you are doing a good job, it gives you confidence (7:6).

Being treated as part of the school and as a respected teacher...in this school we are given many opportunities to take on leadership roles...and I think confidence at the moment is increasing quite rapidly (17:6).

Six teachers cited their confidence arose from particular teaching achievements. For example:

When I offer my services in other classrooms for a hands-on approach that aren't set up for it - like the year one room, and when it works - that makes me feel confident (8:6).

When things have been organised like incursions where the principal has been invited to watch, that have gone extremely well - they can see how well we can do things down here (15:6).

Table 13.6

Situations at school in which early childhood teachers reported feeling confident.

Situation	No. teachers	Percent
1. Feedback /recognition /respect	8	40%
2. Teaching achievements	6	30%
3. Rapport with staff	4	20%
4. Company of like minded people	3	15%
5. Being prepared	2	10%
6. Possessing knowledge	1	5%
7. Parent support	1	5%



Four teachers stated that having rapport with staff, feeling comfortable with them or knowing them on a personal basis helped them feel confident, as did being in the company of like minded people (reported by three teachers). Two teachers stated they felt confident when they were prepared in their work and one teacher each, said that their own knowledge and parent support gave them confidence.

### **Others' understanding of and respect for early childhood philosophy**

This section presents the findings of early childhood teachers' perceptions of the degree of understanding of early childhood philosophy held by the principal, children's parents and other teachers in the school. The findings include early childhood teachers' reported experiences and their views on the impact the level of understanding held by the principal, children's parents and other teachers in the school, has on their abilities to communicate early childhood philosophy.

#### **Principal's understanding**

Eighteen (90 percent) of the twenty teachers interviewed believed that in general, principals do not understand or value early childhood education. Among the comments were:

Most principals don't value it because they don't understand it (3:8).

Principals don't understand where we come from and I think it's their background and training (8:8).

A lot of principals I've had have admitted they don't know anything about ECE (11:8).

Three teachers suggested the reason principals did not value or understand early childhood education was their lack of knowledge or training in the field. Two teachers stated the personality or leadership style of principals affected how well they communicated their philosophy. They revealed:

This principal was very authoritarian and wasn't in to taking up people's ideas and not a very communicative person (5:8).

I had another principal who was very demanding and critical and I think it has a huge effect on how you feel about your teaching and the morale of the whole school and everything (14:8).

As a polarisation to the negative experiences, seven teachers also reported they had worked with principals who were supportive and interested. One teacher stated:

Another principal was really supportive. He visited and the children knew him. He acknowledged the good things that were happening and supported you in decisions. He didn't really have much of an understanding...but he was willing to be part of it (4:8).

Two of the seven teachers who reported positive experiences with principals believed there had been increasing support over the years. One teacher suggested:

I think they are valuing ECE more...with all the documentation K-12...even if it's a numbers situation where they're just boosting school numbers and getting more allocation for administration (20:8).

Further analysis of responses revealed indicators which teachers believed showed whether principals did or did not understand or value early childhood education. Nine teachers suggested that a lack of involvement or interest indicated principals did not value early childhood education. Typical comments included:

One principal I had didn't even want to know about preprimary and in fact I had to direct any queries or problems I had to the deputy (10:8).

The principal often says – "I don't really know what you do up there but it seems to be okay because I haven't had any complaints" (14:8).

A few stand at the door and don't want to come in, in case they get some paint on their suit (4:8).

Three teachers believed that principals failing to support requests for resources indicated a lack of understanding. For example:

Many principals have no idea of the expenditure of preprimaries and that it's just a different type of learning and therefore very reluctant to give away any funds (20:8).

My last principal didn't value ECE at all. I wasn't allowed to have a sandpit or water trolley (5:8).

Two teachers suggested that the way some principals went about achieving their goals within the school often indicated they did not understand or value early childhood education. One teacher stated:

I think there's a new set of principals coming through the schools that are administrators. Their main emphasis is climbing the ladder and they come into the school to get brownie points and they'll get them anyway they can...it's like totally losing focus of the needs of the children (8:8).

Forgetting about, or excluding the preprimary from whole-school activities or decision-making was an indicator highlighted by two teachers, as was the principal placing more priority on the upper primary grades in the school. One teacher commented:

You fade into the background because there's always something much more urgent or important (9:8).

One teacher stated that a principal who did not listen to what they were saying did not value early childhood education, and another teacher believed her principal's actions were not congruent with what he espoused. She reported:

While he professes to be supportive, by some of his actions I don't really feel that he is. If there's a job to be done at the school, he rings for my aide...He sees early childhood as really playing and whether you've got people there or not isn't really important (2:8).

Other teachers identified indicators that principals *did* understand or value early childhood education. Four teachers believed that if principals showed interest or gave support to the program, they valued early childhood education. One teacher suggested:

The interest shown in what you do indicates whether early childhood is valued. Coming down and talking to you, coming to meetings – seem like small things but they are really important when they are added up (15:8).

Two teachers believed that principals who listened to them showed they valued early childhood education and another two teachers suggested an indicator was if the principal was keen to be involved and learn about preprimary. One commented:

I've had three principals in three years and they've always been great towards early childhood and if they don't know much about ECE they admit it but seem really willing to learn (13:8).

Table 13.7 presents a summary of the indicators which early childhood teachers believe show whether a principal does or does not value or understand early childhood education.

Table 13.7

Perceived indicators that a principal does or does not value /understand early childhood education.

Indicators principal does not understand /value ECE	No. teachers	Percent
1. Lack of interest /involvement	9	45%
2. Lack of support for resources	3	15%
3. Ambitious goals at expense of children's needs	2	10%
4. Forgetting /exclusion	2	10%
5. Upper grades priority	2	10%
6. Does not listen	1	5%
7. Incongruous actions	1	5%
<u>Indicators principal does understand /value ECE</u>		
1. Interest /support	6	30%
2. Listens	2	10%
3. Willing to learn /be involved	2	10%

In addition to reporting that principals do not understand or value early childhood education, six teachers highlighted in their responses that the onus was on them to counter the lack of understanding or value principals placed on early childhood education. Comments included:

If you have a principal who was very arrogant and not interested, it would be hard work with them but I think you just have to chip at it (3:8).

If you shout loud enough they will listen (8:8).

If you get in there and say this is important and justify why, then they look at you as if you know what you are talking about (11:8).

## Parents' understanding

The early childhood teachers interviewed, held various perceptions of the proportion of parents who do not value or understand early childhood education. Teachers were not asked to respond in a specified category, however, proportions of 'some' 'a lot' and 'most' emerged as teachers explained their perceptions and experiences with regard to the proportion of parents who do not understand early childhood education. A summary of responses is contained in Table 13.8.

An observation made by three teachers highlighted a possible difference in attitude between parents of high and low socioeconomic areas. One teacher stated:

Where I was with four-year-olds, parents are more involved in their child's education but here it's a bit of a lack of confidence in parents themselves. They might have had a lack of education so they could appear not as interested, but it may be that they did not have a good experience at school themselves so they're a bit reluctant to be a part of it (11:9).

Table 13.8

Early childhood teachers' perception of the proportion of parents who do not value /understand early childhood education.

Proportion of parents	No. teachers	Percent
Some	13	65%
A lot	2	10%
Most	5	25%
Total	20	100%

Analysis of responses revealed indicators which teachers believed showed whether parents did or did not understand or value early childhood education. Ten (50 percent) teachers stated parents did not value early childhood education when they held the view that it was just a play or babysitting situation. For example, one teacher commented:

There are a certain amount of parents that think – great you're looking after them for five days a week. That's fantastic. Now they are in the system, they are off my hands (8:9).

Seven teachers believed that a parent's attitude or lack of interest indicated they did not understand or value early childhood education. For example:

Parents don't have the same commitment to being on time or attending regularly as the rest of the school. They wouldn't do it in year one up because that's when they do the 'real stuff' (7:9).

Sometimes when you refer the child to professionals like speech therapists, I have had parents say – 'Oh it's a waste of time' (13:9).

There's always going to be a certain element that really aren't that interested and are waiting for the more important things to happen with their child like formal schooling (15:9).

Three teachers believed that parents' expectation of more formal learning in the preprimary years indicated they did not understand early childhood education. For example:

Sometimes you get the pressure they want a more formal situation and more year one-ish work coming out of the door every day (19:9).

Two teachers suggested some comments made by parents were also indicators of a lack of value placed on early childhood education. For example:

A lot of my parents are teachers but they have no idea of the work I put in. On my parent night, one of the parent teachers – primary trained said – 'Do they actually learn anything here?' (6:9).

The other teacher reported that at one parent meeting "we asked for...a swing set and the comment was made – 'Don't you think they should spend that money on books instead?' (16:9).

Among the responses were three indicators that teachers believed showed parents *did* value and understand early childhood education. The first was parent support which was identified by four teachers. For example, one teacher commented:

They are actually valuing the topics and activities we are doing. They bring in things to support the program (5:9).

The second indicator – parent interest – was highlighted by one teacher with the comment:

They are eager to be involved, they want to understand where their child is at and what they are doing...They are interested and want to ask questions (8:9).

The third indicator identified by one teacher was parent appreciation. She reported:

The majority of parents I've had dealings with have valued ECE and most have been extremely appreciative of the job you're doing and what's happening in the preprimary (15:9).

A summary of indicators identified by teachers is presented in Table 13.9.

Table 13.9

Perceived indicators that parents do or do not value /understand early childhood education.

Indicators parents do not value /understand ECE	No. teachers	Percent
View as play /babysitting	10	50%
Attitude /lack of interest	7	35%
More formal expectation	3	15%
Comments	2	10%
Indicators parent do value /understand ECE		
Support	4	20%
Interest	1	5%
Appreciation	1	5%

As with the situation of principals who lack understanding of early childhood education, nine teachers highlighted in their responses that the onus was on them to address the lack of understanding or value parents placed on early childhood education. Suggestions were made to do this through communication and education, using such strategies as meetings, newsletters, portfolios and informal methods. One teacher concluded "you've got to tell them. Unless you do they think it is just play" (20:9).

## **Other teachers' understanding**

Eighteen (90 percent) of the twenty teachers reported that other teachers in the school did not understand or value early childhood education. However, it was not possible to determine from the responses, the proportion of other teachers perceived to value or not value early childhood education. Only three of the 18 interviewees assigned proportion of 'some' or 'a lot' to other teachers, the remainder spoke in terms of [other teachers] – 'definitely don't', 'totally true', or 'absolutely' – don't understand or value early childhood education. However, one may infer from these absolute terms that these early childhood practitioners are generalising and referring to the majority, if not all, other teachers. Two interviewees believed that attitudes were changing and other teachers were becoming more aware as they were exposed to documents such as the Curriculum Framework and current research on learning in the early years.

Two of the early childhood teachers reported that they had not experienced other teachers' lack of value or understanding of early childhood education. One raised the possibility of there being a difference in attitude between small and larger schools with the comment:

I haven't found that [other teachers do not value or understand ECE] but I've only ever worked in small schools. From other people I've heard it may be different in larger schools (13:10).

Two interviewees suggested that while other teachers in the school may not understand, it does not necessarily mean that they don't value early childhood education. One other interviewee questioned the expectation of other teachers understanding early childhood education with the statement:

I think other teachers don't value it but they know what hard work it is and go – 'oh God as long as it's not me'. It's a big ask to expect them to understand us when I'm not prepared to learn the year three or four curriculum and understand how it works (9:10).

Some interviewees suggested reasons for, or factors that contribute to, a lack of understanding or value placed on early childhood education by other teachers in the school. Three interviewees suggested a lack of knowledge or experience in early childhood education were contributing factors. For example, one commented:



I think there's always going to be that element in the staff where they've had no experience in early childhood and they don't really know what goes on. Therefore, they don't think about it. They're not terribly interested I think (15:10).

Three teachers suggested a contributing factor was the difference in training and corresponding philosophies between the primary and early childhood years. One teacher revealed:

Before I was an ECE teacher, I was a middle primary teacher and I didn't realise the extent of ECE before I did my training. So I guess there would be a lot of teachers like that (5:10).

Another teacher highlighted the difference between primary and early childhood philosophies with the comment:

When you...try to fit into the formalised primary situation, you're actually coming in on the back foot and there are times when you've actually been talking double Dutch to someone who just doesn't have that [early childhood education] framework behind them (12:5).

Analysis of responses revealed perceived indicators that other teachers did not understand or value early childhood education (a summary is provided in Table 13.10). No indicators were identified that showed other teachers *did* understand or value early childhood education.

Table 13.10

Perceived indicators that other teachers do not understand or value early childhood education.

Indicators	No. teachers	Percent
1. Comments from others	17	85%
2. Priority higher grades	3	15%
3. Lack of interest	1	5%

Seventeen (85 percent) interviewees believed that some comments made by other teachers in the school indicated they did not understand or value early childhood education. For example:

I've heard the comment – “I need a break from teaching, I might try preprimary for a while” – they presume there is not the same depth of professionalism (1:10).

Year one teachers have said to me – “you don't know what real learning is about. When they come to year one they really start to learn” (3:10).

You get a lot of jokes...you know...playing in the sandpit, you get a day off, or you're lucky you get a teacher assistant. So generally we aren't valued by a lot of primary trained teachers (18:10).

Eight of these early childhood teachers reported that other teachers who perceived early childhood education was just about playing or babysitting, indicated they did not value or understand it. For example, one teacher commented “Some teachers think you're just down there playing and it's all good fun” (16:10). Three interviewees referred to the culture in some schools that placed greater importance or priority on the higher grades. One commented:

It's the nature of the world where people don't value younger children. It seems that things happening in the upper school are more critical (9:10).

Four of the 20 teachers interviewed reported they believed that they had some part to play in educating other teachers in the school. Among the comments were:

I think you really need to show off and promote what you do (4:10).

I think the more you talk about it and not be put off by any comments, the more they understand (16:10).

Invite them to any information sessions you have. Any handouts – offer to them...maybe if they read them it might develop some respect (3:10).

### **Time constraints to communicating philosophy**

*Time* was reported to be an issue for 18 (90 percent) of the 20 teachers interviewed through such comments as:

Time is paramount (15:12).

There is always a shortage of time (3:12).

What time? There's no time. That's just a problem across the board at the moment...I don't think anybody's got any spare time at all (17:12).

Two of the teachers stated that time was not an issue for them. They explained:

I haven't had any instances where I've had to talk about early childhood practice. The principal just leaves you to do what you have to do so time isn't really an issue (11:12).

It's not really an issue of time. I've got all these great philosophies but I don't think anyone is interested in hearing them (5:12).

The interviewees were not asked to consider the principal, parents and other teachers separately when describing the issue of time in regard to communicating their philosophy. However, some responses revealed differences in teachers' perceptions of time issues between the principal, parents and other teachers. Six teachers reported that time was an issue for communicating with the principal with comments like "The principal is very busy" (1:12) and "There's always other important issues he's dealing with" (9:13). Three teachers stated time was not an issue with the principal with comments such as:

There's always enough time to communicate with the principal because we have our DOTT [Duties Other Than Teaching time] (18:12).

He's only a phone call away, time isn't really an issue (12:13).

Five teachers mentioned specifically that time was an issue when communicating their philosophy to children's parents. Some commented:

With parents I probably should make more time but I tend to give it to other things (10:13).

It's more a parent time factor than ours. I can be available for parents but sometimes parents don't have time (9:13).

With 27 children in the room you just don't have time to talk to parents about why you are doing something and how play is important (20:13).

Six other teachers, while acknowledging that time was an issue generally, stated specifically that time was not an issue with parents, as in the course of teaching, it is necessary to make the time. For example:

Time is not really an issue with parents...if you are committed you just make the time to involve parents (8:13).

You see the parents everyday so you can speak to them if you want to (11:13).

With parents it's mainly a lack of interest thing rather than time (5:12).

Fifteen interviewees reported time was an issue when communicating their philosophy to other teachers with comments such as:

With other teachers – that's probably the hardest one – we're all so busy (18:12).

We are all busy people and we all have a life outside teaching(13:13).

There's such time constraints it's almost impossible unless you sort something out where everybody can get together after hours, which is hard because everybody's got commitments (19:13).

For one interviewee, time was not an issue with other teachers. The comment was made:

We actually have a staff meeting every week in this school so if there's any concerns you can bring it up then, but I've never had to do that (11:13).

A summary is presented in Table 13.11. Among the responses, reasons were proffered by some teachers as to why time was an issue in communicating their philosophy to others in the school. It was possible to group responses to form two categories. The first category centred on the reason that everyone was so busy and tired, there was no time or energy left to communicate their philosophy. Nine teachers made such comments as:

It's really hard to communicate and I think you're so busy with your own program that you don't sort of get time to think and when you do, you should be putting it into family (6:12).

Most people just want to leave school at the end of the day...you are just too tired and exhausted and too many things are going on (8:12).

There's so many demands on us (10:12).

We're all so busy just trying to keep on top of things (17:12).

The second category was formed with the reason that there is little opportunity or no forum for teachers to communicate their philosophy to others. Among the comments from eight teachers were:

Time is always an issue but we never talk to any one about early childhood philosophy because there's not really a forum for it (9:12).

This year we've had extra meetings but it doesn't really give us time to talk about ECE things unless it comes up (4:12).

Time is a big issue. To sit down and talk properly about an issue, things have to be planned (3:12).

With other teachers there's very little opportunity (7:12).

Table 13.11

Early childhood teachers' perceptions of the issue of time for communicating their philosophy to others.

Communicating philosophy to	No. teachers time is an issue	No. teachers time is <i>not</i> an issue
Principal	6	3
Parents	5	6
Other teachers	15	1

Two interviewees suggested that rather than their own time issue it was an issue of time for others or perhaps the lack of interest from others. One commented:

Some people don't have the time or don't choose to make the time and they don't consider this an important part of the school (7:13).

### Summary

This chapter has reported the findings on the perceptions of 20 early childhood teachers of factors that enhance or constrain their leadership abilities. The constraints reported by early childhood teachers included personal levels of confidence and interpersonal skills; the lack of time and provision of collaborative opportunities with other staff; the leadership style of the principal; and the lack of understanding and support from the principal and children's parents. The antitheses of these constraints were reported to be a source of supportive frameworks that can enhance early childhood teachers' abilities to communicate their philosophy. The teachers believed that their interpersonal and intrapersonal skills influenced their abilities to communicate their philosophy to the principal, children's parents and other teachers in the school. The teachers also reported that their level of professional confidence and time constraints influenced, to varying degrees, their

leadership abilities. The degree of understanding and respect for early childhood education held by the principal, children's parents and other teachers in the school was reported as a major influence on teachers' leadership abilities. A discussion of these findings is contained in Chapter 15.

## **CHAPTER FOURTEEN**

### **PHASE TWO: INTERVIEW FINDINGS PART C – STRATEGIES FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS TO COMMUNICATE THEIR PHILOSOPHY.**

This chapter investigates early childhood teachers' views on strategies to explain their philosophy to others, and in doing so, further addresses research question three identified at the beginning of the study. That is, What strategies do kindergarten /preprimary teachers use to explain their pedagogy to principals, staff and children's parents? In addition, teachers' views on the best strategies to help them develop stronger leadership skills are examined. The strategies are reported under the headings of 1) Educating others; 2) Overcoming time constraints; 3) Increasing professional confidence; 4) Developing leadership skills through professional development; and 5) Leadership skills in teacher training. The findings of teachers' perceptions of these strategies are reported in the present chapter and a discussion of the findings is provided in the chapter that follows.

The source for the information in the tables presented in this chapter is from the interviews with 20 early childhood teachers. Each table may contain a sum that exceeds or falls short of a total of 20 teachers or 100 percent for two reasons. The first reason is that some teachers included more than one factor within their responses, and thus were assigned to more than one category, resulting in the total number of teachers being greater than 20. The second reason is that some teachers did not respond to particular questions, or the meaning of their response was not clear, which resulted in the total number of teachers being less than 20.

#### **Educating others**

All but one of the twenty teachers interviewed proffered ideas on the best way to educate others about early childhood education (see Table 14.1).

Three strategies for educating others were identified by seven teachers. The first strategy was talking and communicating and two teachers commented:

Just keep talking...whenever the situation arises (14:11).

It's almost like chipping away when you have the opportunity to talk with others about what you're doing and why you're doing it (3:11).

The second strategy suggested was to encourage involvement and issue invitations. Comments included:

Invite them in to see what happens (1:11).

[Try] to involve [the principal, children's parents and other teachers] as much as possible, encourage participation (15:11).

The third strategy was to display or promote what early childhood education is about "by just being really public about the things that we do. Making sure we show displays of work and what children can do" (13:11).

Table 14.1

Strategies to educate others about early childhood education.

Strategy	No. teachers	Percent
1. Talking /communicating	7	35%
2. Invitations /encourage involvement	7	35%
3. Displays /promotion	7	35%
4. Information sessions /meetings	4	20%
5. Media	4	20%
6. Support from others	3	15%
7. Involvement in school planning	2	10%

Four teachers each suggested two further strategies. The first was to use information sessions and meetings. For example:

Parent information nights and meetings where a bit of information is thrown in (18:11).

One way would be to explain at a staff meeting your philosophy – how you do it and why you do it (16:11).

The second strategy identified was through the use of media with such comments as:



TV snippets are good to educate the community. Perhaps we need more of that (9:11).

There should be more government brochures – being advocates for children (12:11).

Through using media – local newspapers (17:11).

Two teachers suggested the best way to educate others was to be involved in school planning. One commented:

We can educate them by becoming involved in school planning. Principals are giving teachers more leadership roles...for the first time preprimary has been given the opportunity to be part of the process. A few years ago, preprimary wouldn't have had a look in – these roles went to upper primary staff (8:11).

As a part of the issue of educating others, a few teachers made further observations. One commented that to educate others, you need support and suggested “if you’ve got other K or P teachers [at the school], doing it together is a good way” (4:11). Two other teachers believed such support was necessary from the principal of the school. They commented:

I think it's got to start with the principal...for the principal to realise that this is an important place where children learn (6:11).

Admin could contribute by publicly valuing the ECE end of the school (7:11).

When asked their thoughts on informal versus formal strategies in communicating their philosophy to others, 12 teachers (60 percent) concluded that there needs to be a mix of informal and formal strategies, while eight teachers (40 percent) believed informal strategies are a more effective means to communicate their philosophy to others. Among the comments made by teachers who preferred the use of informal strategies were:

[The use of informal strategies] don't give the impression you are preaching to people (1:3).

Informal strategies are less threatening (10:3).

I would be more comfortable with informal (6:3).

We don't get much opportunity for formal strategies (12:3).

Comments from teachers who believed both formal and informal strategies were necessary to communicate their philosophy included:

Informal and formal strategies have different purposes and you have to look at what you want to achieve and use the best strategy (10:3).  
Informal isn't enough, there needs to be a balance with formal (18:3).

**Overcoming time constraints**

The teachers interviewed suggested various strategies to overcome time constraints in order to communicate more with the principal, parents and other teachers. A summary of the strategies is presented in Table 14.2.

Table 14.2  
Strategies to communicate early childhood philosophy to the principal, parents and other teachers in the school.

Communicating philosophy to	Strategy	No. teachers
1. Principal	Appointed meetings	3
	Chats	1
2. Parents	Meetings in /after hours	3
	Newsletters	2
3. Other teachers	Planned meetings	4
	Informal chats /visits	4
	Common DOTT time	2
4. All parties	Open door policy	2
	Informal methods	2

Two general strategies were proffered as a means to encourage communication with all parties, that is, the principal, children's parents and other teachers in the school. Two teachers highlighted the first general strategy of having an open door policy with the comments:

With an open door policy, when I feel comfortable when they drop in anytime and they feel comfortable and welcome is the best solution for me (1:12).  
I can't really see a solution at all other than to have the preprimary as a very open place (13:13).

The second general strategy suggested by another two teachers was the use of informal methods as being the most effective means of communicating your philosophy. They commented:

Time is important that's why it has to be informal (2:12).

Informal ways are the best ways (1:13).

Three teachers also noted generally, that for communication to occur, the other party must be receptive to what you are saying. For example:

Our year one teacher doesn't want any interaction or collaboration with us – you need them to be receptive to that. You've both got to want to communicate about ECE (9:13).

If there's a negative response to your desire to communicate, then you tend not to in most cases (15:13).

Concerning strategies to communicate with the principal, three teachers suggested making appointments or holding regular meetings as a strategy to overcome time constraints. Another teacher suggested trying her strategy of "being around after school and making myself available for a chat" (2:13). A further two teachers made the comment that when the necessity arose, they made time to communicate with the principal.

Two strategies for overcoming the time issue with parents were suggested by interviewees. Two teachers believed that communicating more with newsletters would help. For example, one commented:

I have little involvement with parents, they don't come on roster. We have to communicate more with leaflets about what we are doing and why. More formal arrangements don't work (2:13).

The other strategy suggested by three teachers was to hold parent meetings after school hours if necessary. One teacher stated:

With parents it's always a matter of you make the time, whether it's in or out of school time because this is vital (15:13).

Three interviewees stated they did not see any ways to overcome the time issue for communicating with other teachers in the school. One commented:

We are all hard pressed for time and you don't want to encroach on anyone. I don't see a way around time because there's just so much to do and most teachers you talk to are frustrated they aren't getting enough time to teach and prepare exciting learning experiences for the kids (17:13).

Four interviewees suggested that planned meetings were one way to communicate their philosophy to other teachers. For example:

Use some time in staff meetings to report what is happening in the ECE area...make it well planned and interesting to others (3:13).

We have instigated a team teaching approach this year and we meet fortnightly with junior primary teachers to discuss issues and how we are going to implement strategies as a team. It's working well (2:13).

Another four of the teachers suggested the use of informal chats or visits to communicate their philosophy to other teachers in the school. Among the comments were:

I should make time to go across occasionally to make sure there are informal times for me to visit them and encourage them to visit me (1:13).

We make a point of leaving the room at lunch time and going to the staff room, even though it's still in the early childhood unit, I think that's the best way you can discuss things (16:13).

One further strategy suggested by two interviewees was to use Duties Other than Teaching Time (DOTT) to communicate with other teachers. One teacher highlighted the importance of collaborating with other teachers in 'school time' with the comment "common DOTT time is important in schools" (4:13).

Four other teachers suggested that time should be provided within the school day for opportunities to communicate with others in the school. For example:

Recently our principal was enlightened to problems between the philosophy of ECE and year one. He was spoken to many times and finally realised that if we were to move ahead and everyone work together there had to be time made. So he gave us a whole morning (3:12).

If you're not given time you won't actually do it [communicate philosophy] because you are just too tired and exhausted and too many things are going on (8:12).

### **Increasing professional confidence**

Teachers suggested various ways to increase professional confidence. A summary of responses is shown in Table 14.3.

Table 14.3

Early childhood teachers' views on how professional confidence can be increased.

How confidence can be increased	No. teachers	Percent
1. Recognition /feedback /respect	11	55%
2. Interaction with peers	7	35%
3. Relevant professional development	5	25%
4. Knowledge	2	10%
5. More Public Relations	2	10%
6. Experience /maturity	1	5%

The most common response to the question of how a teacher's professional confidence could be increased was to receive recognition, respect, or positive feedback from others. Among the responses were:

More pats on the back. If you see something good happening, tell them (7:7).

Just remembering we are a part of the education system and we have a lot to offer and by just putting value on early childhood and early childhood practice. Even though early childhood is part of the school, it's like the little wombats that climb out of their hole once a week. Maybe they should ask us to climb out of our little holes more often (8:7).

A lot of principals don't tell you when you are doing something good and when they're pleased (11:7).

It doesn't have to be a lot, just an acknowledgement of something that's been achieved, or interest shown by coming to see what's being done (15:7).

The next most common suggestion for developing professional confidence in teachers was through collegial interaction with their peers. Suggestions included:

Some interaction with other teachers to get feelings of I'm doing the right thing or I'm on the right track (9:7).

More workshops where early childhood teachers can get together and discuss strategies where they're having problems...For new graduates we need to have more peer support (16:7).

Whilst two teachers suggested that confidence could be boosted through maintaining knowledge and keeping abreast of developments in early childhood education, five others raised the notion of boosting confidence through access to relevant professional development. As one teacher stated:

[Professional development] always develops confidence in the areas we feel we need, so being able to do that, and be funded for it, would make a huge difference (18:7).

One teacher believed that more experience and maturity would develop confidence, whilst two others believed that increased public relations in and for schools was the answer. These teachers commented:

I think one area is the role of your employer – the Education Department, and the need for it to do some parent education and public awareness. I wish there was a lot more PR in what schools are doing and to make us feel good about what we are doing (12:20).

Changing the attitude of the general public. Doing much more PR about schools, about teachers in particular (17:7).

In the latter comment, the teacher suggested that more effort should go into educating the public, with more positive promotion of teachers and their job coming from the employer (Education Department) level, as well as, the school level.

### **Developing leadership skills through professional development**

When commenting on developing leadership skills through professional development, one interviewee suggested that not all teachers understand what leadership means apart from the traditional roles such as the principal of a school. She commented “I think we need more clarification on what leadership actually is before we can look at developing stronger skills” (10:18). At the conclusion of their interview, two other teachers also highlighted the possibility that some teachers may not be familiar with the term leadership used with reference to anything other than the traditional leadership roles assumed within schools. They reflected:

Leadership is something I haven’t thought about...I’m not really sure what it means in its entirety (10:20).

The perception of leadership is not really clear. [In the application for a level 3 teacher], one of the things was leadership and I thought...the only time I see other teachers is at staff meetings, so I put it in the too hard basket. But I suppose I could have shown leadership in working with parents (14:20).

All but two of the twenty teachers interviewed suggested some form of professional development they believed would help them develop stronger leadership skills. A summary is provided in Table 14.4.

Table 14.4

Early childhood teachers' views on professional development to help develop stronger leadership skills.

Suggested professional development	No. teachers
1. Leadership /interpersonal skills training	10
2. Interaction with peers	6
3. Practice articulating /communicating philosophy	5
4. Access to relevant professional development	3

The most common form of professional development, suggested by ten teachers, was leadership and interpersonal skills training. For example, two teachers stated:

I think it would be really great if we had more...psych related [professional development] where you are taught leadership skills and how to handle conflict and difficult and angry people – learning to look at ourselves objectively (18:18).

I think [professional development] in...assertiveness training...and the leadership thing's a big thing. I think you need training in it. You need the knowledge if you haven't already got it...I think there's a perception – you're only in preprimary you can't be a leader...it's the structure and hierarchy of schools (8:18).

The next most common form of professional development was suggested by six teachers who believed professional development in the form of interacting with their early childhood teaching colleagues would help develop stronger leadership skills. Two commented:

I've found the most helpful [professional development] is getting together with other teachers and sharing and talking and so forth (19:18).

Opportunities for teachers to get together regularly in small groups (I tend to be quiet in large groups) to talk about and reflect on our professionalism and what we see as the key issues in ECE. The more

we talk about it as a group, the more we'll be able to form our own opinions (1:18).

Five teachers viewed practice at articulating and communicating early childhood philosophy as potentially helpful professional development. For example:

I think we need...practice . . . talking about what you believe and your philosophy – to tell other people about it (10:18).

Some sort of [professional development] that gets [your philosophy] straight in your head and some sort of ways to communicate it...[for] teachers who have got a bit stale and out of practice with their own philosophy or haven't thought about it (5:18).

Three teachers believed it was necessary to have access to professional development that was relevant to individual early childhood teachers' needs. They commented:

For a school like ours we need [professional development] much more related to what we are doing in our own classrooms – not whole school stuff like we do (9:18).

There's some really good leadership stuff like a conference I went to but they aren't open to the general [teaching staff]. Unless you're searching for the leadership stuff as an individual, you don't get it (12:18).

I think you have to [identify] what you need to learn about and find out where you can go for [professional development] like that (16:18).

Some teachers made further comments about the notion of developing stronger leadership skills. Two teachers suggested their current forms of professional development provided them with information, but little opportunity, to develop skills. One commented:

I think how we do [professional development] now, teachers are really discouraged from developing any leadership skills. We are encouraged to sit back and just be quiet and listen to whoever is the latest guru from district office which is extremely boring. Most teachers are there because they have to make up the time or whatever (9:18).



## Leadership skills in teacher training

All but one of the twenty teachers interviewed, believed additions could be made to teacher training to help early childhood teachers develop their leadership skills. Suggestions from teachers were placed into six categories (see Table 14.5).

The one teacher who could not provide a suggestion as to what should be included in pre-service courses commented:

I'm not really sure whether anything could be added [to teacher training] because I really think that confidence develops with experience. I really think you have to be out in a classroom to gain that confidence (15:17).

Table 14.5

Teachers' suggestions for additions to early childhood teacher training.

Suggested addition	No. teachers
1. Practice articulating /justifying philosophy	11
2. Leadership /interpersonal skills training	5
3. Parent interaction skills	4
4. Contact with teachers	3
5. More teaching practice	2
6. Lecturer input	2

The belief that confidence develops primarily with age and experience was reiterated by another two teachers. For example one teacher commented:

I know from my own experience, I've developed a lot more confidence as I've got older and had more experience (9:17).

Eleven (55 percent) of the twenty teachers believed there should be more opportunity to practice articulating and justifying their philosophy during teacher training. Two teachers commented:

I don't think the training prepares you for the fact that you may have to stand up for what you believe in and tell parents, other teachers and principals what you believe and why you believe...Maybe practicing speaking about your philosophy would be a good thing to include (2:17).

Just get more practice at [articulating] it before you get thrown out into the real world and have to do it (6:17).

Five teachers believed general leadership and interpersonal skills training should be included in pre-service courses. For example;

I don't think leadership skills are discussed in training...maybe interpersonal skills training as well to give people the confidence to speak (2:17).

I wish we had training on how to talk to school [psychologists] who are really high school oriented. To actually be given the opportunity to strut our stuff to fight for something and to...go through the role-play phases because that's the hardest thing – going to a parent or principal and having a real problem...to actually say things like the 'I statements' without attacking. We learn how to talk to kids but not to adults (12:17).

Three interviewees suggested that contact with teachers in the form of talks, visits or mentoring would be beneficial during teacher training. They commented:

Trainees need lots of talking, especially with real teachers...maybe visiting schools more often – not just on prac but looking and talking to teachers (4:17).

I think mentoring would be the best way (17:17).

Maybe getting people currently working in the field to talk about what we are doing is important and what are the things they can do to promote the importance in a school (10:17).

Another two teachers suggested more teaching practice was necessary in pre-service courses. One teacher commented:

[There needs to be] a lot more prac where you are getting out with parents and teachers. I don't think you do enough prac (11:17).

As another source of modelling or learning from others, lecturer input was viewed by two teachers as an important part of teacher training. They commented:

If lecturers present with confidence ECE philosophy as something to be proud of it's more likely trainees will pick up that pride in their profession and take it out with them (1:17).

Trainees should be told they are an equal member of staff, not second rate because they are ECE...they need to be told to...offer opinions and to hell if it's different from year six or seven's. Your opinion is just as valuable as every body else's. You've got to push yourself to be an equal member of staff (7:17).

## Summary

This chapter has investigated the strategies that 20 early childhood teachers reportedly use to explain their philosophy to others, and their views on strategies to help them develop stronger leadership skills. Whilst some teachers reported that they prefer to use the less threatening, or more 'comfortable', informal methods to communicate their philosophy, most teachers agreed that it is desirable to use a mix of informal and formal methods. Teachers proffered a mix of informal and formal strategies to educate others about the early childhood way of teaching that included conversation, invitations, displays, information sessions, gaining support from the media and others in the school, and being involved in school planning and decision-making. The early childhood teachers believed that the principal, children's parents, other teachers and the education system have a significant role to play in boosting their professional confidence. The early childhood teachers also believed that additions to teacher training courses such as practice at articulating and justifying early childhood philosophy; leadership and interpersonal skills training; and further opportunities for mentoring and learning from others would help them develop stronger leadership skills. The teachers suggested that the principal, children's parents, other teachers and the education system should provide early childhood teachers with support, recognition, respect and resources for professional development and opportunities to collaborate with their peers. A discussion of these findings, together with a discussion of the findings of the preceding chapter (Part B of the interview findings) is contained in the following chapter.

## **CHAPTER FIFTEEN**

### **DISCUSSION OF INTERVIEW FINDINGS.**

This chapter provides a discussion of the findings presented in the preceding two chapters. The discussion is presented in two main sections. The first section discusses the interview findings from Part B, the factors that enhance or constrain early childhood teachers' leadership abilities (reported in Chapter 13) and the second section discusses the interview findings from Part C, strategies for early childhood teachers to communicate their philosophy (reported in Chapter 14).

#### **Factors that enhance or constrain early childhood teachers' leadership abilities.**

In this section, the factors that early childhood teachers reported enhanced or constrained their leadership abilities are discussed under the same headings used to report the findings in Chapter 13, that is, 1) Intrapersonal and interpersonal skills; 2) Professional confidence; 3) Others' understanding and respect; and 4) Time.

#### **Intrapersonal and interpersonal skills**

Although the 20 early childhood teachers agreed that intrapersonal and interpersonal skills were important to their leadership roles, they reported that these skills influenced their leadership abilities to varying degrees. One teacher highlighted the issue that the degree of influence of intrapersonal and interpersonal skills varied, depending on with whom you were working. Kolb (1999) too, suggested that a person's leadership abilities can be influenced by the nature of the people they are working with. Interpersonal relations will be easier when people are open or receptive to the views of others. For teachers to be leaders, others must perceive them as such and believe that their knowledge and practice are worthy, and able to contribute to educational processes (Kolb, 1999; Rinehart, et al., 1998).

In this light, it is important that early childhood education and early childhood teachers are viewed by the principal, parents, other teachers and the wider community, as an equal and a respected part of the school. In order for early

childhood teachers to communicate their philosophy and pedagogy to others in the school, others must perceive them as holding worthy knowledge, and others must be receptive to what the early childhood teacher has to say. In the same vein, the majority of early childhood teachers believed that it is important to be confident and friendly in situations such as relating to others, and defending and justifying their philosophy. However, possessing a high level of intrapersonal skills such as confidence, and effective interpersonal skills, is not a guarantee that early childhood teachers can communicate their philosophy and pedagogy to the principal, children's parents, and other primary teachers in the school, if they are not respected.

Considered as a process involving intrapersonal skill, critical reflection has been identified as an element essential to the process of teachers gaining control over themselves, their classrooms and the educational process (Allen, 1992; Brookfield, 1995). However, the findings of the present research indicate that the majority of the early childhood teachers had not reflected, in any depth, on their situation with regard to articulating and communicating early childhood philosophy. The lack of reflection is consistent with other research that suggested many teachers do not pause to reflect on their own situation (Brookfield, 1995; Cassidy & Lawrence, 2000; Duff, Brown & Scoy, 1995; Huberman, 1993). Of the 20 early childhood teachers interviewed, 18 (90 percent) reported that participation in the interview had caused them to reflect on some issues they would not normally have taken time to reflect on. It appears then that the intention of the study from a critical theory perspective to raise the consciousness of participants, with regard to the issue of articulating and communicating their philosophy, has been realised. It is also speculated that completing the questionnaire may have caused respondents to reflect on some issues in greater depth than usual, as indicated by two respondents noting in the questionnaire, "Thanks for the opportunity – it's really made me think!" (1) and "Thanks...this is very interesting and has raised many points for me to consider" (138:d).

### **Professional confidence**

Findings from the interviews indicated that the majority (65 percent) of the early childhood teachers reported they were confident to talk about their philosophy. In support of this, in Phase One of the study, measurement showed that the large

majority of teachers indicated that they were able to explain the early childhood way of teaching to children's parents, the principal and other teachers (Items 87, 89 and 91).

Findings from the interviews revealed the majority of the 65 percent of teachers reportedly confident in talking about their philosophy attributed their professional confidence to two main factors; belief and enthusiasm for early childhood philosophy; and experience based on life, teaching and knowledge. Whilst enthusiasm and passion have been identified as characteristics of an effective leader (Sergiovanni, 1992), these attributes have not emerged directly in other studies that investigated aspects of leadership in early childhood education (for example Freeman & Brown, 2000; Rodd, 1996, 1997b; Sebastian-Nickell & Milne, 1992; Stonehouse, 1992, 1994). Characteristics that have emerged in these studies include a genuine commitment and conviction to follow through their vision, of what early childhood education should be. It may be that, in order to pursue their vision, early childhood teachers must possess a degree of conviction and enthusiasm, as reported by these confident teachers. Alternatively, it may be considered from another perspective that self-efficacy and confidence in communicating early childhood philosophy may lead to higher levels of enthusiasm and a greater willingness to take risks (Chemers, Watson & May, 2000; McMullen, 1999).

Considered in the light of belief and enthusiasm, it is interesting to note that some teachers went so far as to liken the act of communicating their philosophy to others as 'preaching' (1:2, 10:12) or 'bible bashing' (9:16). The use of these metaphors conjures up the image of attempting to communicate early childhood philosophy in the face of adversity – to those unwilling or not able to see the 'truth'. Indeed one respondent in Section C of the questionnaire noted "It is easier to preach to the willing" (Q58:d).

The second main factor that teachers attributed to their confidence was experience based on life, teaching and knowledge. Possessing a sound knowledge base of early child development and pedagogy is a universally accepted prerequisite of an early childhood leader (Ebbeck, 1990; Stonehouse, 1994) and other research has supported the suggestion that teachers' confidence may increase with their experience (Berliner, 1994; Jorde Bloom, 1999; Vander Ven, 1991). Considering the two elements of knowledge and experience together, Rodd (1994, p. 19) suggested

that “wide experience and a depth of knowledge” will aid early childhood practitioners in creating and communicating their vision, drawing enthusiasm from those around them. However, others have cautioned that teachers should not view their knowledge or competence as a once gained achievement (Sachs, 1998; Sarason, 1990; Stonehouse, 1992). Rather, knowledge and competence should be regarded in terms of “retaining” or “enhancing” these through engagement in lifelong learning (Rodd, 1997b; Ruohotie, 1996, p. 442) and critical reflection, continually evaluating practice (Brookfield, 1995; Hamilton, 1994).

Interestingly, for the 13 teachers who reported that they were confident to articulate and communicate early childhood philosophy, the number of years teaching experience ranged from two to twenty three years, with a mean of 11.3 years. The years of teaching experience for the seven teachers who reported they lacked confidence in this area ranged from a few months to thirteen years, with a mean of 6.1 years. Thus the mean number of years teaching experience for those teachers who reported they were confident is almost double that of the teachers who reported they lacked confidence in articulating and communicating their philosophy. It appears that while greater teaching experience does not contribute to increased professional confidence for some teachers (five of the seven reportedly not confident had greater than five years teaching experience), it may be a contributing factor for the teachers who reported they were confident to articulate and communicate their philosophy. Further reference is made to this issue later in the chapter where more teachers reported their professional confidence developed in line with their experience. However, there are strong indications that personality, self-esteem and self-efficacy also make substantial contributions to a teacher's professional confidence. These aspects were highlighted in observations made by two of the seven teachers who reported that they lacked confidence. By contrast with the less confident teachers, the confident teachers commented:

I've met one or two people that are really confident. They can be overbearing – over confident sometimes. Confidence is a good thing but overconfidence can sometimes blind us to the fact that we can all improve on our strategies for communication (1:16).

I think that the people who find it easy are really passionate about it and confident – the personality of the teacher that they're confident (6:16).

### **Lack of confidence in situations**

The majority of the early childhood teachers interviewed were able to provide examples of situations at school in which they lacked confidence. Although three teachers reported to be confident in all situations at their current school, two of these teachers were able to provide examples of situations in which they lacked confidence at previous schools which highlights the fact that teachers' confidence can be influenced by the context in which they work. School contexts which are supportive may serve to boost teachers' confidence, while unsupportive contexts may undermine teachers' confidence (Hawkey, 1996).

One group of situations in which some teachers reported to lack confidence was when a person of power or authority did not value or support early childhood education. Others, too, have noted that situations or relations that involve power can limit teachers' actions in a school and erode their confidence or sense of efficacy (Coldarci & Breton, 1997; Halliwell, 1990b; Riehl & Lee, 1996). Some teachers also attributed their lack of confidence to their youth or lack of experience. Daniel (1994) highlighted the vulnerability of new graduates when exposed to a range of inappropriate practices and expectations that may be a part of the culture in some schools. The images of new graduates about the sort of teacher they want to be can be undermined by a context that does not support them. Similarly, Hawkey (1996) suggested that contexts, which do not allow practitioners to implement their teacher self-images, can undermine teachers' confidence.

Considered through the lens of critical theory, it is evident that an uneven distribution of power within schools continues to be the norm. Much has been written about the need to empower teachers within schools (for example, see Ingvarson, 1998; Rinehart, et al., 1998; Stone, 1995; Weber, 1996), however, teachers in the present study have highlighted their minority position and their subsequent lack of power within schools. From a broader perspective, it should also be noted that in order for principals to facilitate the empowerment of teachers, they too must receive support from the education system to achieve empowerment themselves. Smythe (1996) highlighted the importance of empowerment throughout the interlocking contexts in which teachers work when he emphasised the need for governments to empower schools and their communities.



The majority of situations in which teachers reportedly lacked confidence at school appear to relate to the view of early childhood education as a minority that is assigned the lowest priority or status within the school setting. Teachers reported they lacked confidence when they were: in situations of conflict; under pressure to explain or justify their philosophy to others; speaking to a large group or articulate people; minority in school meetings; subject of critical observation or disparaging comments; and when they lacked support and understanding from others.

Some teachers noted that their own shortcomings (such as the lack of articulation skills or a reluctance to talk in large group situations) contributed to their lack of confidence in some instances. This explanation reflects a tendency towards an internal locus of control with teachers perceiving events in their environment as dependent on their own behaviour (McMullen, 1999). However, the majority of teachers tended to have a more external view of situations citing early childhood education being a low status minority with others holding the power, and others' lack of understanding or support as contributing to their lack of confidence in some school situations. This attribution reflects an external locus of control orientation from which teachers perceive that events are beyond their control, or "determined by more powerful others" (McMullen, 1999, p. 20). The tendency to make "external attributions" as a result of negative feedback has been noted (London, 1995, p. 226), as has the tendency to blame others for feeling inferior (Cole & Chan, 1994; Gratz & Boulton, 1996). It has also been found that negative feelings can lead to false interpretations and discourage participation or persistence in some situations (Allen, 1992; Neck & Barnard, 1996). However, other research has found that some teachers do experience difficulty being assertive in situations involving conflict with parents or others (Hargreaves, 1997; Rodd, 1997b), and in relationships where power is involved, such as in supervisory relations (Ben-Peretz, 1996; Coldarci & Breton, 1997). Further, Cox (1996) validated teachers' reluctance to speak out at whole school staff meetings where they are a minority, or in situations of conflict, noting that "generally women find conflict hard to deal with" (p. 156). Cox also suggested that in group processes such as staff meetings:

Those unhappy with what goes on are theoretically free to raise their concerns, but are then often labelled as difficult or trouble makers (Cox, 1996, p. 157).

Considered from a critical theory perspective, if early childhood teachers remain silent in whole school decision-making, the interests of the majority, or those more powerful, will be protected (Anderson, 1996; Smythe, 1996). This situation highlights the importance for teachers to be provided with opportunities and encouragement within the school, to voice their opinions on school policy and decision-making (Witcher, 2001). Active participation of teachers in school life is believed to increase their status within the school context (Rinehart, et al., 1998). However, with reference to school reform, Toll (2001) cautioned that shared decision-making may not always be successful due to competing philosophies of the participants. By the same token, Toll also posited that the process of shared decision-making can help make explicit, the competing views of power in schools. Through participation in whole school decision-making, early childhood teachers may serve to highlight differences in participants' philosophies, and make evident, the political forces and power at work within schools.

### **Confidence in situations**

The majority of situations at school in which teachers reported they felt the most confident involved relations with, and associated feedback from, others. It appears teachers' feelings of efficacy and confidence may be increased, or at least validated, through feedback from others in the form of support, recognition and friendly interpersonal relations or rapport. However, findings from the present study indicate that in many instances, early childhood teachers are not receiving recognition or support from others within their school context. A critical theory perspective highlights that teachers work in a set of interlocking contexts (Young, 1989) and early childhood teachers may receive varying amounts of recognition and support within each context. For example, some teachers reported that they felt they received recognition and support from parents within the context of their classroom or centre, but that there was a lack of support and recognition from within the school context. In the school context, the majority of teachers reported that they did not feel respected or valued by the principal or other primary teachers in the school. Similarly, some teachers commented that they did not feel respected or valued within the context of the education system as a whole, or indeed, within the wider contexts

of the community and society in general, contexts in which they believed early childhood education is afforded a low status.

Three of the situations in which teachers reported that they felt most confident stemmed from their own actions. For example, some teachers reported that their teaching achievements gave them confidence. However, from their comments, it appears that these teachers too, looked for feedback or recognition of their achievements from the principal, children's parents or other teachers in the school. Other teachers reported they drew confidence from the knowledge of early childhood education they possessed and through being prepared for particular situations. Being unprepared, or caught unawares, was a situation that caused some teachers to lack confidence. Egley and Egley (2000, p. 48) highlighted the importance of early childhood practitioners being prepared by stating "they need to be poised and must be ready to support their beliefs with knowledge and research".

### **Others' understanding and respect of early childhood philosophy**

Findings from the interviews with early childhood teachers indicate that the majority of early childhood teachers do not believe they receive understanding, respect or support from the majority of principals, other primary teachers, and some parents. The impact that others' understanding has on early childhood teachers' perceptions of their leadership abilities is discussed in the sections following.

### **Principals' understanding**

Eighteen (90 percent) of the twenty teachers interviewed believed that in general, principals do not understand or value early childhood education. Some teachers attributed the principals' lack of understanding and respect to a lack of knowledge or training in the field. More than five years ago, Stamopolous (1995) highlighted the need for in-service training for principals in Western Australia, following principals' reports that they lacked knowledge in the field of early childhood education. However, it appears that to date, principals still lack specific knowledge of early childhood philosophy and pedagogy, and thus may not be empowered to support early childhood education within their schools. The lens of critical theory shows that the lack of support for the principal from the education system, in terms of ensuring principals are empowered with current knowledge of

early childhood education, impacts on early childhood teachers and their leadership efforts within the school context.

Other early childhood teachers attributed principals' lack of understanding and respect for early childhood education to the principals' personality or leadership style. Two teachers reported their principal was authoritarian and critical, and it follows that teachers who work with authoritarian leaders are more likely to experience difficulty in communicating their philosophy to them. Indeed Blasé (1988) found that teachers were more 'closed' with authoritarian principals and thus less likely to attempt to influence them in any way. The importance of support from the principal has been highlighted with the comment from Weber (1989, p. 210) that teachers need to "sense a principal's respect, or even deference, for their own professional abilities". A lack of support or respect from the principal can undermine teachers' professional confidence.

Weber (1989, p. 196) warned against losing focus of children's needs suggesting that 'successful' principals are, above all, concerned about the welfare of students in their care. Although only two teachers raised this issue, it is a concern that they perceive there is a 'new set' or group of principals who may not regard the welfare of preprimary children as an important issue. However, this issue may also be viewed as the principal's lack of knowledge and understanding of appropriate early childhood programs rather than a direct lack of regard for the children's welfare. A critical theory perspective concerning the issues of power in school relations can lead to further insight into how some early childhood teachers perceived their principals through examining the language and metaphors that the teachers used in their interview. For example, when reflecting on their personal experiences with principals, some teachers referred to their principal who 'was authoritarian' (5:8); 'tends to...divide and conquer' (2:8); 'eroded my confidence' (7:5); 'walk on people' (8:8); 'demanding and critical' (14:8); and 'overrides it [my decisions]' (2:8). One teacher spoke of principals and leadership as 'the old boys club' (12:8) and another said that some principals' objective was 'climbing the ladder' (8:8). These comments from teachers provide insight into the store of implicit knowledge that they hold about power relations in their school context. The language that these early childhood teachers used with reference to some principals

indicates a negative perception of power relations and their own less powerful position within their school.

By contrast, some teachers believed that their principals listened to them and were keen to learn more about the early childhood way of teaching, thus demonstrating that they valued early childhood education. Weber (1989, p. 203) suggested that "principals' knowledge of curriculum and instruction can be extended greatly by listening to teachers". In addition, if a principal 'listens' to teachers and shows an interest in learning about early childhood education, then teachers perceive early childhood education as being valued as part of the school.

Previous research has indicated that principals' understanding and support is necessary for effective early childhood programs to be implemented (Cassidy, et al., 1995; Greenberg, 1995; Lieber, et al., 1997). However, the majority of teachers from the present study indicate that they do not believe they receive understanding and support from their principal, and consequently, that the principal does not value early childhood education. These perceptions are founded on indicators from the principals' behaviour that teachers identified. These behaviours include the principals': lack of interest and involvement; lack of support for resources; ambitious goals at the expense of children's needs; forgetting or excluding preprimary from whole school activities or decision-making; not willing to listen; and incongruous actions. Conversely, if principals demonstrated that they were interested and supportive; listened to early childhood staff; and were willing to be involved in and learn more about early childhood programs; then teachers perceived the principal did value and understand early childhood education.

However, despite teachers reporting that they believe the majority of principals do not value early childhood education, six teachers asserted that the onus was on themselves to counter the lack of understanding and respect for early childhood education held by principals. Thus, while teachers may experience constraints or barriers to communicating their philosophy to the principal, some regard it as their responsibility to persevere with communications.

### **Parent understanding**

Parents have been identified as a source of concern and stress for teachers through their lack of support and interest, or their being highly critical of the

program, believing their children are not stimulated intellectually (Gold & Roth, 1993). Similarly, parental influence on early childhood programs has been noted (Egley & Egley, 2000; Hills, 1987; Stipek & Byler, 1997). In one study, principals acknowledged the influence of parents as the second most influential factor, after teacher beliefs, that affects the implementation of developmentally appropriate programs for young children (French & Pena, 1997).

In the present study, the majority of teachers reported that they believed some parents did not understand or value early childhood education. The indicators that parents did not value or understand early childhood education were cited as parents' view of the program as play or babysitting; attitude or lack of interest; expectations for formal learning; and lack of understanding or value conveyed through comments. Conversely, if parents demonstrated through their behaviour that they were supportive, interested and appreciative of the program, then teachers perceived they did value and understand early childhood education.

Although research has highlighted the importance of communicating early childhood philosophy for reasons of accountability and educating others (David, 1997; De Acosta, 1996; Egley & Egley, 2000; Taba et al., 1999), additional research has indicated that working with parents is one aspect that some teachers find difficult (Hargreaves, 1997; Rodd, 1997b). It may be the case that teachers realise the importance of communicating their philosophy to children's parents and indicate that they would like to ideally, but in practice, experience difficulty or encounter barriers.

### **Other teachers' understanding**

Findings from the interviews in this study revealed eighteen (90 percent) of the twenty teachers reported that other teachers in the school did not understand or value early childhood education. The possibility of there being a difference in attitudes of primary staff between small and larger schools was raised by one early childhood teacher. This difference has been noted by Jantzi & Leithwood (1996) who suggested small schools provide more opportunities for all teachers and leaders to work together more closely. In such situations, early childhood teachers may be provided with more opportunities to communicate their philosophy in a collaborative and supportive environment. However, it should be noted that supportive and collaborative frameworks are not always evident in small schools. The influence of

the principal with this regard has been highlighted by French and Pena (1997) who found that some principals in smaller schools provided less support for some aspects of early childhood programs.

Some teachers suggested that factors contributing to the lack of understanding and value placed on early childhood education by primary teachers were the lack of knowledge and a difference in training and corresponding philosophies between the early childhood and primary years. This divide between early childhood and primary educational philosophies has been noted in the literature. Differences in educational terminology and its relative meaning is one issue (Halliwell, 1990a; Stonehouse, 1994) with primary and early childhood teachers holding differing perceptions over the meaning of such terms as *developmentally appropriate practice*. Indeed, one teacher took this issue further with her comment in the questionnaire that while some teachers may interpret what is said to be consistent with their philosophy, it is only “when philosophy becomes practice that the differences appear clear” (106:d).

Differences among year level taught and educational orientation has been noted as affecting interactions among staff with the lower grades and early childhood education accorded the lower status within the school (Hargreaves, 1994; Sarason, 1991). Gifford (1993, p. 23) too, highlighted the unsupportive school context with “indifference” or indeed “positively hostile” attitudes towards the early childhood way of teaching. In their responses, some interviewees referred to the culture in some schools that placed greater importance or priority on the higher grades. Many would argue at this point that early childhood practitioners should be proactive and rise to the challenge highlighted by such cultures. Whitebook (1997, p. 82) suggested early childhood practitioners need to “challenge” the “internalised cultural norm” of the low value of early childhood education, and Gratz and Boulton (1996) asserted early childhood practitioners need to speak positively of their role, emphasising they are not babysitters.

The low status of early childhood education within the school context and the contrast between the choice of proactive or reactive roles is captured in metaphors used by two teachers. One teacher portrayed the image of low status when referring to early childhood being perceived by the principal and other staff in the school as the “little wombats that climb out of their hole once a week” (8:7). The teacher went

on to comment “maybe they should ask us to climb out of our little holes more often”. It appears this teacher has assumed a reactive role in terms of waiting to be invited to come ‘out of the hole’ by the principal or others in the school. In contrast, another teacher who lamented on the lack of opportunities for teachers to develop their interpersonal skills, highlighted the need for early childhood teachers to take a proactive role “to strut our stuff, to fight for something” (12:17). It seems this teacher sees the need for early childhood practitioners to challenge the low status of early childhood education and to be proactive in imparting their pedagogy and philosophy to others in a confident up front manner.

The majority (90%) of early childhood teachers reported they believed that, on the whole, other teachers in the school did not value or understand early childhood education. The indicators that other teachers did not value or understand early childhood education were cited as: other teachers’ comments; greater priority or resources allocated to the higher grades; and a general lack of interest. However, as found in the responses to whether principals and parents valued early childhood education, some interviewees acknowledged the need to challenge cultural norms, believing the onus was on themselves to address the lack of understanding or value placed on early childhood education by other teachers in the school.

### **Time constraints to communicating philosophy**

Time constraints for teachers have been reported in the literature since the 1980s (Wasley, 1991) and time was reported to be an issue for 18 (90 percent) of the early childhood teachers interviewed. Two teachers reported that time was not an issue for them. However, it is possible that time would become a consideration for these two passive teachers if they were to take a proactive role in communicating their philosophy. Choosing to take a more passive role with regard to communicating early childhood philosophy may be a coping mechanism or a ‘safer’ role to assume.

When reflecting on the issue of time, nine (45 percent) of the twenty teachers made reference to their busy lives both inside and outside their work context. Family commitments on top of a school day have been reported as a source of extra stress for some teachers (Gold & Roth, 1993). The pressure or constraints some teachers



face at work are compounded by the added demands in their personal life, and in some cases, if not addressed, lead to teacher burnout.

The majority of teachers interviewed reported that time was an issue for them with regard to communicating their philosophy to the principal, children's parents and other teachers. However, it appeared to be more of an issue in communicating early childhood philosophy to other teachers in the school. It appears there may be more opportunities for early childhood teachers to make the time to communicate with the principal and children's parents as the need arises. However, the early childhood teachers reported that such opportunities to collaborate or communicate with other teachers in the school are not as prevalent. This situation reflects findings from the literature (Firestone, 1996; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992; Hargreaves, 1994; Wasley, 1991) that highlight the fact that most schools do not have the infrastructure to support many collaborative opportunities for teachers.

It may be the case that early childhood teachers are more motivated or committed to communicate their philosophy to parents as an inherent expectation of their teaching role. Similarly, it may be an expectation that they engage in some form of communication about their program with the principal in the course of their work. Communications with other teachers, however, may not be viewed by early childhood practitioners as a role expectation, but rather as an extra or added task (Barth, 2001; Somech & Drach-Zahavy, 2000), and thus not be assigned any importance or priority. Indeed, one teacher alluded to the lesser priority placed on communications with other teachers saying, "with other teachers I'd say it would go on the back burner very often" (15:13). Further, some early childhood teachers may 'detach' (Duke, 1994) from the primary sector of the school, feeling 'territorial', 'defensive' or 'scared' (Walker-Duff, 1997) due to negative feedback or constraints they face in voicing aspects of their philosophy.

However, it has been suggested that some teachers blame a lack of time as a result of feeling inferior (Gratz & Boulton, 1996) or being a 'reticent consumer' teacher prototype who believes the "system is inherently oppressive and unfeeling" (Joyce, Weil, & Showers, 1992, p. 285). Thus some suggest that teachers may use a lack of time as an excuse for not fulfilling a particular role (such as advocating early childhood philosophy). Others, too, assert that teachers need to be proactive in making time and demonstrating leadership by finding ways to "concentrate scarce

time and energy" in order to achieve desired outcomes (Duke, 1994, p. 271).

However, others have realised or confirmed the constraints teachers face in terms of time, and called for more support from the employer or 'system'. These researchers posit that it is crucial for teachers to be supported within the system through provision of time and opportunities to collaborate with others within their working day (Ebbeck, 1990; Hargreaves, 1994; Wasley, 1991; Witcher, 2001).

### **Summary of factors that enhance or constrain leadership abilities**

This section has investigated the factors that 20 early childhood teachers reported enhanced or constrained their leadership abilities, in particular, to articulate and communicate early childhood philosophy. In doing so, research question two has been addressed. The findings from this chapter support those from Phase One of the study, and much of the existing literature in the field, with early childhood teachers facing similar constraints and barriers to teachers across the educational sector. These constraints include personal levels of confidence and interpersonal skills; the lack of time and provision of collaborative opportunities with other staff; the leadership style of the principal; and the lack of understanding and support from the principal and children's parents. The antithesis of these constraints is the source of supportive frameworks that can enhance early childhood teachers' abilities to be an advocate and communicate their philosophy.

In addition to the constraints faced by other teachers, early childhood practitioners face constraints peculiar to their grade level within the school context. The teachers in this study reported that early childhood education was largely not valued or understood by the principal, children's parents and other teachers. This situation reflects the general low status of young children in our society and perpetuated in the 'pecking order' of the grade levels in our education system. The majority of the early childhood teachers hold the perception that, on the whole, they are not accorded equal status and professional respect by their primary school oriented colleagues who represent the majority on school staff. These barriers reported by early childhood teachers, pose real constraints to their efforts in articulating and communicating their philosophy to others in the school context. As one teacher summed up, "I think the hardest thing is the time factor and the willingness and interest of other people in the school" (9:20). Some teachers feel

overwhelmed by these constraints and adopt what has been referred to as the role of 'victim', one which is regarded as a safe and reactive role, as opposed to the desired proactive role (Cox, 1996; Gold & Roth, 1993).

By the same token, the early childhood teachers reported that the counter side to these constraints helped them to communicate their philosophy to others. That is, if others provided them with feedback and recognition for their efforts; included them in school activities and decision-making; were willing to listen to their views; and showed an interest in, and support for, the early childhood program, then early childhood teachers believed they were valued and thus more empowered to communicate their philosophy. These findings are consistent with existing research that has found support and respect from others (for example, the principal, colleagues and children's parents) can empower teachers (Lieber, et al., 1997; Rinehart, et al., 1998; Stone, 1995; Stone, Horejs, & Lomas, 1997; Weber, 1996).

Despite the majority of teachers painting a picture of constraints to articulating and communicating their early childhood philosophy to others, some acknowledged the onus was on themselves to overcome these constraints and to be proactive in advocating for early childhood philosophy and the profession. For over a decade, there has been consistent urging from researchers in the field, for early childhood practitioners to be proactive in advocating for young children and the profession (Blank, 1997; Ebbeck, 1990; Fleer, 1996; Rodd, 1994). The findings of the present research indicate early childhood teachers acknowledge the importance of communicating their philosophy and, ideally, would like to become more proficient at doing so. In order to adopt this advocacy role and communicate early childhood philosophy to others, practitioners need to be confident, assertive (Rodd, 1997; Witcher, 2001) and most importantly, possess a desire to take on this role (Duke, 1994; Kolb, 1999).

The findings of the present study highlight some inconsistencies in this area. Whilst the majority (65 percent) of teachers interviewed reported they were confident to talk about their philosophy and that they believed it was important to do so, this confidence and belief did not always appear to translate into practice. That is, simply reporting to be confident and willing to articulate and communicate early childhood philosophy does not guarantee that it will be effected. For example, the majority of teachers who reported to be confident indicated there were instances when they were

not able to articulate and communicate their philosophy. These instances included when others had no respect for, or interest in, early childhood education, or were not willing to listen to early childhood teachers' views and opinions. Data from Phase One, too, indicated that the majority of teachers would like to be more confident in explaining about the early childhood way of teaching to others. Considered from this perspective, the case is highlighted that in order for early childhood teachers to communicate their philosophy, there needs to be support from the interplay of factors emanating from within and to the teacher. That is, in addition to possessing appropriate intrapersonal and interpersonal skills, early childhood teachers must receive respect and support from others from within the interlocking contexts in which teachers work (Young, 1989). The skills of early childhood practitioners, alone, are not enough to overcome some of the constraints they face in their work milieu. Some of these constraints emanate from, or are reinforced within, broader contexts such as the education system, the community and government agencies. It may be argued that early childhood teachers must develop further leadership skills in order to overcome constraints. However, it is a great ask when these teachers may not have access to resources that will help them develop these skills, and no supportive framework within their work context.

The following section discusses the issue of support and strategies to develop stronger leadership skills from the early childhood teachers' perspective. The discussion is focussed on early childhood teachers' views on how to develop stronger leadership skills and the strategies they suggest can be used to explain and communicate their philosophy to the principal, children's parents and other primary teachers in the school.

### **Strategies for early childhood teachers to communicate their philosophy.**

In this section, the strategies that early childhood teachers reportedly use to explain their philosophy to others, and their views on the best strategies to help them develop stronger leadership skills, are discussed under the headings used to report the findings in the preceding chapter. The headings are 1) Educating others; 2) Overcoming time constraints; 3) Increasing professional confidence; 4) Developing leadership skills through professional development; and 5) Leadership skills in teacher training.

## **Educating others**

All but one of the twenty teachers shared their views on the best way to educate others about early childhood pedagogy and philosophy. Two teachers suggested the best way to educate others was to become involved in whole school decision-making and planning. This strategy reflects the urging from researchers in the field, for over a decade, for early childhood practitioners to develop the confidence and ability to participate actively in school decision-making (Gifford, 1993; Rodd, 1994; Stone, 1995). It seems from teachers' comments that in some schools, early childhood teachers are encouraged to participate in or, at least be included in, school decision-making. However, some teachers have also indicated that the reverse is true in some school contexts. Ensuring their own participation and inclusion in school matters would be difficult for early childhood practitioners who did not have respect and support from other staff in the school.

Two teachers suggested that before they could begin to educate others about early childhood philosophy and pedagogy, it was essential to have support from the principal in the form of open recognition and respect for early childhood education within the school. The importance of support from the principal for early childhood programs has been highlighted in the previous two chapters. The influence of the principal on teachers' abilities to articulate and communicate early childhood philosophy has been mentioned consistently by teachers in the present study. The principal is an important source of support, through indicating to others that early childhood education is valued within the school. Thus the principal has the power to ultimately 'make or break' early childhood teachers' efforts to communicate their philosophy to the principal and other teachers in the school.

The early childhood teachers were asked to consider the merits of using informal versus formal strategies to communicate their philosophy to the principal, children's parents and other primary teachers in the school. Twelve teachers (60 percent) concluded that there needs to be a mix of informal and formal strategies, while eight teachers (40 percent) believed informal strategies are a more effective means to communicate their philosophy to others. It was interesting to note that whilst informal strategies were described by some teachers as less threatening to themselves and others, there did not appear to be a preference for informal strategies among those teachers who reported they lacked confidence. Rather, four of the eight

teachers who reported to prefer the use of informal methods for communicating their philosophy to others were those who also reported themselves to be confident in articulating and communicating their philosophy. No one strategy emerged as the best way to educate others, but rather, teachers proffered a mix of informal and formal strategies including conversation, invitations, displays, information sessions, gaining support from the media and others in the school, and being involved in school planning and decision-making.

### **Overcoming time constraints**

The early childhood teachers interviewed suggested various strategies to overcome time constraints in order to communicate more with the principal, children's parents and other primary teachers in the school. They suggested informal strategies such as chats and formal strategies, including arranged meetings and newsletters, to overcome time constraints to communicate their philosophy to others. Four teachers suggested that time should be provided within the school day for opportunities to communicate with others in the school. The need for provision of time for collaboration among staff in a school has been emphasised continually (Firestone, 1996; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992; Hargreaves, 1994; Troen & Boles, 1994; Wasley, 1991; Witcher, 2001). Many early childhood teachers from both Phase One and Two of the present study indicate they are provided with opportunities within the working day, or can make the time, to communicate with the principal and children's parents. However, very few indicated they were afforded the same opportunities within school time for collaborating with other teachers in the school, and some revealed they were not motivated to 'make the time' or commit out of school time to collaborate with other staff. As discussed in the previous chapter, it seems that early childhood teachers view communicating with parents as important, and are willing to commit out of school time to do so. On the other hand, despite the majority view that communicating with other teachers is also important, it may be perceived as an extra-role behaviour (Somech & Drach-Zahavy, 2000). As an extra-role behaviour, communicating early childhood philosophy to other teachers in the school is not part of the formal teaching duties, and failure to engage in it does not attract any penalty. Indeed, not making the effort to communicate their philosophy may be viewed by early childhood teachers as a 'safer' mode, to be reactive rather

than proactive, with regard to broaching their philosophy with teachers from a primary oriented philosophy.

Nevertheless, the early childhood teachers in the present research have suggested various strategies to overcome time constraints. These strategies encompass both informal and formal means, and are consistent with the findings from other research that teachers' satisfaction is enhanced when they are provided with both formal and informal planning and communication opportunities (Lieber, et al., 1997).

### **Increasing professional confidence**

The most common response to the question of how teachers' professional confidence could be increased was to receive recognition, respect or positive feedback from others. The importance of teachers receiving positive feedback and recognition from others has been highlighted in the literature. Weber (1989) posited that recognition increases teacher motivation, and Stone (1995) suggested that teachers were empowered when their successes and strengths were validated. However, Barth (2001) pointed out that recognition of teachers' efforts was very much lacking in the culture of most schools. Rinehart, et al. (1998) suggested that to be empowered, teachers must have professional respect and support from their colleagues for their knowledge and practice. Validation and personal support can also be obtained through collegial interaction with educational peers (Firestone, 1996; Hargreaves, 1994; Hargreaves & Evans, 1997; Sergiovanni, 1990), and this was the next most common suggestion as a source of developing professional confidence.

Five teachers suggested that professional confidence could be boosted through access to relevant professional development. Ruohotie (1996), too, posited that involvement in professional development could increase teachers' confidence. However, one teacher whose comment was reported in the previous chapter, highlighted the issue of employer funded professional development. There is widespread agreement that teachers must view themselves as life long learners and engage in professional development in order to maintain or up-date their professional knowledge (Ingvarson, 1998; Sachs, 1998; Sarason, 1990; Stonehouse, 1994). However, as one respondent (115) highlighted in the questionnaire, teachers who

practice in country schools have fewer opportunities to access professional development than those in the metropolitan area. Whilst some believe the employer must contribute to teachers' professional development with the provision of time and resources (Fessler & Ungaretti, 1994; Futrell, 1994; Hargreaves & Evans, 1997; Ingvarson, 1998), others have emphasised that because such support is not often forthcoming, it is imperative for teachers to be proactive in pursuing or directing their own professional development (Ingvarson, 1998; Sachs, 1998; Stonehouse, 1992).

It is interesting to note that the majority of suggestions for increasing teachers' professional confidence involve input from others. Teachers' own experience, maturity and knowledge were suggested sources of boosting confidence that rested with the individual. The remaining suggestions relied on others to provide the means of boosting confidence. That is, teachers tended towards an external locus of control viewing that others should provide recognition, respect and feedback; interactions; professional development; and public relations as a means of increasing teachers' professional confidence. It seems that early childhood teachers perceive others, such as the principal, children's parents, other teachers and the education system as an influential source of increasing their own professional confidence.

### **Developing leadership skills through professional development**

In the course of considering developing leadership skills through professional development, three teachers highlighted the possibility that some teachers may not be familiar with the term leadership used with reference to anything other than the traditional leadership roles assumed within schools. This lack of awareness has implications for the endeavour to develop stronger leadership skills among early childhood practitioners. Wasley (1991) suggested teachers' personal definitions of leadership could influence the leadership roles they assume. It appears that some teachers may not associate their realisation of the importance to communicate early childhood philosophy to others, or their actions with this regard, to the role of 'leadership' in early childhood education. Some may view leadership as something that extends beyond their role as teacher and thus, something that does not concern them directly. Such a situation highlights the need for more early childhood



practitioners to be included in whole school activities requiring leadership, and to be provided with access to professional development with a focus on leadership skills. Indeed, Kolb (1999, p. 318) stressed the importance of providing people with opportunities to experience leadership roles, “otherwise, those who have limited experience with leadership might believe they have no skills in this area”.

In addition to being viewed as a means of increasing professional confidence, collegial interaction with their peers was suggested by early childhood teachers as a form of professional development that could help teachers develop stronger leadership skills. Support through collegial interactions and mentoring activities has been widely recognised as beneficial for teachers (Firestone, 1996; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992; Hargreaves, 1994; Martin, 1994; Smythe, 1996; Wallace, 1999; Wood & Bennett, 2000). Talbert and McLaughlin (1996) linked higher levels of teacher professionalism to their involvement in subject area or teacher network groups. Teachers who participated in such professional groups displayed higher levels of professionalism than teachers in settings where collegial and collaborative activity were limited. Thus, teachers who are able to access early childhood education network groups or meetings will most likely source a part of their professional confidence to the collegial interactions and support from within these groups.

In the previous section regarding increasing teachers' professional confidence, the issue of employer provided or funded versus teacher initiated professional development was discussed. It was posited that, ideally, both the employer and individuals should contribute towards the professional development of teachers. However, given the lack of support from within the system (Hargreaves & Evans, 1997; Ingvarson, 1998), it was asserted that teachers need to be proactive in pursuing or directing their own professional development (Ingvarson, 1998; Sachs, 1998; Stonehouse, 1992). An acknowledgment or awareness of this issue is reflected in the comments from two teachers reported in the findings, with the realisation that unless you go searching yourself, “you don’t get it”.

Another issue that is highlighted by these two teachers' comments is the barriers that make accessing relevant or desired professional development difficult. The teacher who suggested that some professional development is not open to the general teaching population, attended a conference that was intended for

administrative levels of school staff. She noted that although the conference was very informative and worthwhile, she would not have known about it, or indeed, been able to access it without the help of a colleague. This situation of the lack of opportunities for, and the fragmented nature of, leadership training has been noted across countries (Fessler & Ungaretti, 1994; Nivala, 1998; Rodd, 1997b, 1998; Wasley, 1990).

In the context of existing professional development opportunities, one early childhood teacher suggested that some teachers attend sessions in order to accumulate spent professional development hours. Others (Joyce, Weil & Showers, 1992; Wasley, 1990) have noted the issue of teachers' attending professional development largely for the purpose of collecting credits, rather than for the content. It is evident that some teachers perceive little or no benefit from some forms of professional development offered to them. However, it also appears from the comments of some teachers in the present study, that a number of teachers are seeking professional development that is relevant and in the form that they are able to transfer the knowledge gained to their practice or in assuming leadership roles.

The need for professional development based on principles of adult learning has been highlighted previously (for example, see Sarason, 1991; Tanck, 1994; Wadlington, 1995). One of the principles of adult learning encompasses the need for adult learners to "assess their own growth needs, control their own learning procedures and schedules, and see practical results in their work" (Tanck, 1994, p. 95). Ingvarson (1998) raised a further point with regard to professional development and its relevance to individual teachers. He posited that professional development should be matched to the phases of development in teaching careers. Examples discussed in Chapter Two of the present study are the Katz (1977); Vander Ven (1988, 1991); and Jorde Bloom (1999) models. Ingvarson (1998) argued that after about seven years of teaching, teachers can become frustrated, detached and withdrawn, or be motivated towards experimentation or greater efficacy in their work. It is essential that professional development be matched to the needs of teachers, in order to help them progress, rather than regress or stagnate in their development. Considered from this perspective, it is envisaged that professional development needs will vary, for example, between beginning and experienced teachers. Comments from teachers in the present study indicate that the varying

professional development needs of teachers are not being met within the school context, thus again emphasising the need for early childhood teachers to take charge of their own professional development.

### **Leadership skills in teacher training**

In a study of English early childhood practitioners, Rodd (1998) reported that the practitioners perceived interpersonal relationships with adults to be an important aspect of early childhood programs. However, it appears that there is an absence or limited inclusion of learning how to communicate with, or teach adults, in the preparation of teachers of young children (De Acosta, 1996; Stipek & Byler, 1997; Tull, 1994; Whitebook & Bellm, 1996). Indeed, one teacher made reference to the problem some teachers have with regard to communicating with adults, in a concluding comment to her interview:

It's amazing, we want children to do that, to tell news and use voices and say what they want to do, yet some people are reluctant to practice that in their own profession (20:19).

Research has shown that training in leadership skills development can be effective. For example, Bloom and Sheerer (1992) conducted an early childhood leadership program which included components of parent and community relations and advocacy. Many participants in the program reported increased assertiveness, motivation to become involved in early childhood issues and an advocate for the profession. Similarly, Morris, Taylor, Knight & Wasson (1995) conducted a course focussing on leadership roles in parent involvement programs for elementary and early childhood education student teachers. Students reported that participation in the course increased their confidence level, helped them determine their leadership roles and increased their interpersonal skills.

The benefits of mentoring and learning from the experiences of other teachers has been documented widely (Brindley, Fleege, & Graves, 2000; Gold & Roth, 1993; Lambert, 1998; Silva, Gimbert & Nolan, 2000; Troen & Boles, 1994; Whitebook & Bellm, 1996; Wood & Bennett, 2000). Whitebook and Bellm (1996, p. 60) suggested that the most important role of a mentor is to provide "support and encouragement" to a colleague or student, while encouraging them to take risks, rise to challenges and be active agents in their professional development.

These comments highlight the importance of early childhood teachers learning to respect themselves and their profession. However, there remains a fine line between preparing early childhood practitioners to challenge the low status or priority they will be afforded in schools and society, and reinforcing the 'internalised norm' or that the problem is insurmountable. One teacher, at least, recognised the importance of esteeming herself, with the comment she made at the conclusion of her interview:

The big thing is to let people know that you're there...you're an equal...and give your opinions on stuff that's happening (7:20).

### **Summary of strategies for communicating early childhood philosophy to others**

This section has discussed the strategies that 20 early childhood teachers reportedly use to explain their philosophy to others, and their views on strategies to help them develop stronger leadership skills. The findings on the strategies that teachers use to explain their philosophy to others support those from Phase One of the study. That is, whilst some teachers reported that they prefer to use the less threatening, or more 'comfortable', informal methods to communicate their philosophy, most teachers agreed that it is desirable to use a mix of informal and formal methods. Teachers proffered a mix of informal and formal strategies to educate others about the early childhood way of teaching, including conversation, invitations, displays, information sessions, gaining support from the media and others in the school, and being involved in school planning and decision-making.

The findings of this chapter, again, highlight the discrepancy between the ideal and real aspects of teacher leadership. The early childhood teachers have reported they believe it is important to educate others about the early childhood way of teaching, and have suggested strategies to do so, but in Section B of the questionnaire (reported in Chapter 7) teachers have indicated they find it 'hard' to enact particular leadership roles which are necessary to implement the strategies. For example, teachers suggested using conversation and information sessions to communicate their philosophy to others but reported in the real aspect of leadership that they find it 'hard' to say they are confident to speak publicly about the early childhood way of teaching to others. Teachers also indicated that they found it 'hard' to say that they tell the principal about their early childhood philosophy.

Further, teachers suggested the strategy of ensuring they are included or involved in school decision-making and planning but reported this was 'hard' to do in reality.

The findings also indicate that early childhood teachers believe that the principal, children's parents, other teachers and the education system have a significant role to play in boosting their professional confidence. They believe that additions to teacher training courses such as practice at articulating and justifying early childhood philosophy; leadership and interpersonal skills training (particularly skills for interacting with adults); and further opportunities for mentoring and learning from others would help them develop stronger leadership skills. The teachers believe the principal, children's parents, other teachers and the education system should provide early childhood teachers with support, recognition, respect, and resources for professional development and opportunities to collaborate with their peers. However, in the absence of respect and support from others, the importance is highlighted for teachers to respect themselves and take charge of their own professional development needs.

The next and final chapter provides a summary of the study and draws together the major findings, conclusions and implications of the study.

## **CHAPTER SIXTEEN**

### **TOWARDS A NEW MODEL OF EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHER LEADERSHIP: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FROM THIS STUDY**

This chapter begins with a summary of the study, drawing together the major findings from both Phases One and Two. The findings are drawn together in the framework of addressing the research questions proposed at the outset. Next, implications are outlined for administrators, early childhood teachers, teacher educators, and for further research.

#### **Summary and research findings**

This study was conducted in two phases, whereby the findings from Phase One of the study informed the direction for Phase Two of the study. Phase One involved testing a new Model of Early Childhood Teacher Leadership and measuring the teacher leadership of 270 early childhood teachers in Western Australia. Data were obtained through a survey questionnaire that involved responding to items of leadership in the real and ideal modes. A Rasch measurement model was used to create a valid and reliable Scale of Early Childhood Teacher Leadership which was comprised of 92 items (38 real and 54 ideal). The Scale of Early Childhood Teacher Leadership was based on a multi-aspect model that stemmed from General Leadership, Communication and Influence. Phase One culminated in the development of insights into how teachers conceptualised their leadership roles through analysis of their responses to open-ended questions. These insights provided the framework for the formulation of the face-to-face follow-up interviews that comprised Phase Two of the study.

In the course of conducting the research through Phases One and Two, the five aims of the research were met. That is, 1) early childhood teachers' leadership was measured and calibrated with item 'difficulties' on the same scale; 2) a model of early childhood teacher leadership was developed, based on General leadership,

Communication and Influences; 3) the model was tested using the RUMM (2000) computer program; 4) the psychometric characteristics of the scale were analysed; and 5) the qualitative data from the questionnaire and interviews were analysed to gain further insights into how Western Australian early childhood teachers conceptualise their leadership roles. The major findings of the study are summarised within the framework of the research questions outlined in Chapter One.

*Research Question 1: How do Western Australian kindergarten /preprimary teachers conceptualise their role with regard to leadership in the early childhood setting? What are teachers' 'ideal' views of their leadership in schools? What are teachers' 'real' views of their leadership in schools?*

Research question one has been addressed specifically in Chapters 7, 11 and 12 of the study. One of the major findings of this study confirmed the expectation, that in general, early childhood teachers find it easier to hold higher ideal self-views for most aspects of leadership than to hold high real self-views for most aspects of leadership. The mean item 'difficulty' for each sub-scale indicated that the only real aspect of leadership that was 'easier' than any ideal aspect was self-leadership. The real mode of self leadership was 'easier' than the ideal *Communications to me* and *My influence on the principal* which were the 'harder' aspects of leadership in both the ideal and real mode. Where both the ideal and real items fitted the model, the ideal items were 'easier' than the real items.

The findings indicate that the teachers believe leadership skills are important and they would like to hold high self-views of their leadership. This finding was supported by the data obtained through the follow-up interviews. Teachers believe it is important to possess particular leadership skills such as being confident, assertive and articulate in order to communicate their philosophy and pedagogy to others. They also believe that these skills are necessary in order to state or justify their view, to include them in whole-school planning and decision-making, and to resist pressure from others for inappropriate practice.

The findings indicate early childhood teachers acknowledge the importance of communicating their philosophy, and ideally, would like to become more proficient at doing so. Similarly, most teachers perceive that there is a need to communicate their philosophy, but some indicate they have rarely or never had to do so, or were tired of explaining or justifying their philosophy. The majority of

teachers interviewed tended towards an external locus of control whereby constraints they faced were largely attributed to external sources such as a lack of time and others' lack of understanding about early childhood education. Some teachers recognise the need to be proactive in communicating their philosophy which indicates a more internally-oriented locus of control. However, being proactive is a role that the majority of early childhood teachers find difficult in their work context, with many perceiving their work milieu to be generally unsupportive and one in which early childhood education lacks understanding or respect. Indeed, some teachers referred to their work context in terms of being engaged in a battle or war involving different philosophies. The following list provides a brief summary of the main findings of the study related to how early childhood teachers perceive their role with regard to leadership. The teachers in this study perceive:

1. Leadership roles are important to their work as early childhood teachers;
2. There is a need to communicate early childhood philosophy and some perceive the need to be proactive;
3. It is easier to hold high ideal self-views of leadership than real self-views and teachers would like to demonstrate stronger leadership skills; and
4. Their work context is generally unsupportive of early childhood education and most constraints to communicating early childhood philosophy are attributed to external sources.

*Research Question 2: What factors do kindergarten/preprimary teachers say enhance or constrain their leadership abilities, in particular, their abilities to articulate and communicate what they know and do as early childhood teachers?*

Research question two has been addressed specifically in Chapters 8, 9 and 13 of the study. Teachers reported four global factors that were the source of constraints to communicate their philosophy to others. The antithesis of these constraints is the source of supportive frameworks that enhance teachers' abilities to communicate their philosophy to others. These factors are 1) intrapersonal and interpersonal skills; 2) professional confidence; 3) others' understanding and respect; and 4) time. Findings from the study indicate that teachers perceive their intrapersonal and interpersonal skills can enhance or constrain their abilities to articulate and communicate their philosophy, or to defend or justify it to others.



A major finding of the study is that the majority of early childhood teachers reported that they did not feel confident to explain to the principal and other teachers at the school, the early childhood way of teaching. With respect to general perceptions of professional confidence, teachers reported that they lacked confidence when they were: 1) in situations of conflict; 2) under pressure to explain their philosophy to others; 3) speaking to large groups; 4) the minority in school meetings; 5) subject to critical observation or disparaging comments; and 6) when they lacked support and understanding from others. The majority of situations in which teachers reported that they were most confident involved relations with others and associated positive feedback, recognition and respect from others.

Other findings of the study indicated that the majority of teachers do not believe they receive understanding and support from principals. Particular behaviours of the principal that indicated to teachers that early childhood education is not valued, included: 1) lack of interest and involvement; 2) lack of support for resources; 3) ambitious goals at the expense of children's needs; 4) forgetting or excluding early childhood staff from whole school activities or decision-making; 5) not willing to listen; and 6) actions incongruent with words. Conversely, if principals demonstrated through their behaviour that they were interested, supportive, listened to early childhood staff, and were willing to be involved and learn more about early childhood programs, then teachers perceived the principal does value and understand early childhood education.

Similarly, the majority of early childhood teachers reported that they believe some parents do not value or understand early childhood education. This was indicated through: 1) viewing the program as play or babysitting; 2) having a disinterested attitude; 3) having expectations of formal learning; and 4) showing a lack of understanding or value of early childhood education through particular comments. On the other hand, if parents demonstrated that they are supportive, interested and appreciative of the program, then teachers perceived that they did value and understand early childhood education. In the same vein, the majority of early childhood teachers reported that, on the whole, other primary teachers in the school did not value or understand early childhood education. This was indicated by 1) other primary teachers' comments; 2) a greater priority or resources allocated to the higher grades, and 3) a general lack of interest in early childhood education.

Another finding of the study was that whilst a lack of time was reported to be an issue when communicating early childhood philosophy to children's parents and other teachers, it is more of an issue with other primary teachers. Early childhood teachers from the study indicated that there are opportunities to make the time to communicate with the principal and children's parents, but few opportunities to communicate with other primary teachers. It was concluded that early childhood teachers did not attach as much importance to, or desire to communicate their philosophy to, other primary teachers, or their desire to communicate it to them was not as strong as the perceived need or desire to communicate it to the principal or children's parents. The following list provides a brief summary of the main findings of the study related to the factors that early childhood teachers report enhanced or constrained their abilities to explain their philosophy and pedagogy to others. The majority of early childhood teachers in this study reported that:

1. They are not confident in explaining their early childhood philosophy or pedagogy to others. Those who do report themselves as confident still find it difficult to enact aspects of articulating and communicating their philosophy and pedagogy to others;
2. They are generally not reflective on their abilities to, or on the context within which they do, communicate their philosophy and pedagogy to others;
3. They face constraints similar to those faced by other teachers in the school, but also have to contend with early childhood education being a low status minority in the school with a different philosophical orientation to primary education;
4. Time is more of an issue for communicating philosophy and pedagogy to other teachers in the school. Teachers in the study reported that there were fewer opportunities to communicate with other teachers during school time than with the principal or parents;
5. They gain confidence through support, recognition, positive feedback and respect from others; and
6. They believe early childhood education is not understood or valued by others.

*Research Question 3: What strategies do kindergarten /preprimary teachers use to explain their pedagogy to principals, staff and children's parents?*

Research question three has been addressed specifically in Chapters 10 and 14 of the study. One global strategy, reported by many early childhood teachers, that underpinned most strategies suggested as a means to communicate early childhood philosophy and pedagogy, was to seize opportunities as they arise. No single strategy emerged as the best way to educate others about early childhood education. Rather, teachers proffered a combination of informal and formal strategies, including conversation, invitations, displays, information sessions, gaining support from the media and others in the school, and being involved in school planning and decision-making.

A major finding of the study was that the majority of teachers reported that they are able to find, or make the time, to communicate their philosophy to the principal or children's parents as the need arose. However, despite recognising the importance of communicating their philosophy, early childhood teachers indicated that they are not provided with opportunities in school time, or that they are not willing to commit time outside their working day to communicate their philosophy to other teachers in the school. Nevertheless, teachers suggested informal strategies such as chats and formal strategies, including arranged meetings and newsletters to overcome time constraints to communicate their philosophy to others.

Another finding of the study was that the strategies suggested by teachers to improve their professional confidence in order to help them communicate their philosophy to others were predominantly derived from others. That is, early childhood teachers expected that others (the principal, children's parents, other teachers and the education system) should provide recognition, respect, positive feedback, opportunities for interaction with peers, relevant professional development, and public relations to promote early childhood education. Early childhood teachers suggested some strategies to help them communicate their philosophy to others and proposed that relevant professional development could be one source of boosting their confidence. They suggested professional development addressing leadership and intrapersonal and interpersonal skills training, interaction with their peers, and practice at articulating and communicating their philosophy and pedagogy. Comments from early childhood teachers indicated that their varying professional

needs were not being met in the school context. Early childhood teachers also suggested that more leadership skills, including intra and interpersonal skills development, could be included at the undergraduate level of teacher education, with practice at articulating and justifying early childhood philosophy, learning parent interaction skills and, through more contact with, or mentoring from, practicing teachers.

The following list provides a brief summary of the main findings of the study related to the strategies early childhood teachers suggested can help them explain their philosophy and pedagogy to others. The majority of early childhood teachers in this study reported that:

1. It is best to use a combination of formal and informal strategies to communicate early childhood philosophy to others;
2. Opportunities to collaborate with other staff are not provided in school time, and communicating with other staff is not viewed as a necessity, or teachers are not willing to commit time to collaborate after school hours;
3. Relevant professional development could boost professional confidence and help them communicate their philosophy and pedagogy to others;
4. Their professional development needs are not being met in the school context; and
5. More leadership skills development could be included at pre-service and in-service levels of teacher education.

*Research Question 4: Can kindergarten /preprimary teachers' self-views on leadership (based on general leadership, communication and influence) involving 'ideal' and 'real' aspects be modelled and aligned on a scale from 'low' to 'high', using a Rasch Measurement Model? Can the 'difficulties' of the items relating to leadership be aligned on the same scale as the leadership measures from 'easy' to 'hard'?*

Research question four has been addressed specifically in Chapter Seven of the study. The results of Phase One of the study indicate that early childhood teachers' real and ideal self-views of leadership can be aligned using a Rasch Measurement Model on a scale from 'low' to 'high' and the 'difficulties' of the items relating to aspects of leadership can be aligned on the same scale as the leadership

measures from 'easy' to 'hard'. The 92 items (38 real and 54 ideal) that fitted the measurement model formed a valid and reliable interval-level scale. The measures of early childhood teacher leadership ranged from 0.03 to 6.04 logits. Of the 270 early childhood teachers, 60 had low measures of leadership (0.03 to 1.95 logits); 169 had medium measures of leadership (2.00 to 3.96 logits); and 41 had high measures of leadership (4.05 to 6.04 logits). In order to answer the more 'difficult' items in the *all or nearly all the time* category, teachers needed to have a correspondingly high leadership measure.

The 'difficulties' of the items ranged from -2.19 logits ('very easy') to +4.42 logits ('very hard'). For example, item 2, *I handle a classroom crisis well* (ideal mode) has the lowest 'difficulty' of -2.19 indicating it was 'very easy' for teachers to say that they would like to handle a classroom crisis well *all or nearly all the time*. Item 115 *I am asked questions about my philosophy by other teachers* has the highest 'difficulty' of 4.42 logits indicating that teachers found it 'very hard' to say that other teachers ask them questions about their philosophy *all or nearly all the time*.

Although teachers found the majority of items in the real mode 'easy', they found the corresponding ideal mode 'easier'. For example, in the real mode, the stem item 47/48 *I feel sure of myself at school* has a 'difficulty' of +1.84 logits which indicates that teachers found it 'easy' to say that they feel sure of themselves at school *all or nearly all the time*. However, in the ideal mode, this item 'difficulty' is -1.85 logits which indicates that teachers found it 'very easy' to say that they would like to feel sure of themselves at school *all or nearly all the time*. In other words, teachers would ideally like to find it easier than they do, to say that they are sure of themselves at school, *all or nearly all the time*.

Another example is item 131/132 *I would try to change school policy if it conflicts with my philosophy*. In the ideal mode, the item has a 'difficulty' of +0.70 logits indicating that teachers found it 'easy' to say they would like to change school policy if it conflicted with their own philosophy *all or nearly all the time*. However, in the real mode, the item 'difficulty' is +2.12 which indicates that teachers found it 'hard' to say that they do try to change school policy, *all or nearly all the time*, if it conflicts with their own philosophy.

With each item in the real and ideal mode aligned together in the same manner, and with teacher leadership measures on the same scale, a valid and reliable scale was formed from which early childhood teachers' self-views of their leadership could be determined.

*Research Question 5: Can a model be devised to explain early childhood teachers' self-views of leadership, based on 'ideal' and 'real' aspects, and on general leadership, communication and influence aspects?*

A multi-aspect model of Early Childhood Teacher Leadership was devised, based on teachers' real and ideal aspects, and on General Leadership (classroom leadership, self-leadership, school leadership, and program leadership); Communication (from early childhood teacher to principal /children's parents /other teachers and from principal /children's parents /other teachers to early childhood teacher); and Influence (early childhood teacher influence on the school, and early childhood teacher influence on the principal). As conceptualised, teachers found it 'easier' to hold higher ideal self-views of leadership than real self-views of leadership. Of the original 142 items, 50 did not fit the model. Teachers may not have answered these items in a consistent and logical manner or there may have been a lack of consensus among teachers on the 'difficulty' of the item. It is possible that these items are not influenced predominantly by teacher leadership. It is also possible that improved wording of the items may result in a fit to the model.

The 'easier' aspects of Leadership were Program Leadership and Self-leadership from the General Leadership aspect, while the 'harder' aspects were Influence on the school and the principal, and Communication from the principal, children's parents and other teachers to the preprimary teacher. For example, in the General Leadership aspect, the sub-scale of Program Leadership in the ideal mode had the lowest mean item 'difficulty' of  $-1.88$  logits, indicating that the nine items that fitted the model, were 'very easy' for teachers to respond to in the highest category. In this sub-scale, teachers found it 'very easy' to say they would like to *feel involved in school life* (item 42) and to *be viewed as an equal by colleagues of their own sex* (item 50).

The sub-scale with the highest mean item 'difficulty' was Communication from the principal, children's parents and other teachers to the preprimary teacher, in

the real mode. This sub-scale had a mean item 'difficulty' of +3.06 which indicated that, in general, teachers found these items 'hard'. For example, teachers found it 'hard' to say that they are *given positive feedback for their program by other teachers* (item 99), *praised for particular projects by other teachers* (item 109), and 'very hard' to say that they are *asked questions about their philosophy by their principal* (item 117).

In general, the findings of this study indicated that early childhood teachers found it more difficult than they would like, to enact particular leadership roles within each aspect (General Leadership, Communication, and Influence) of the model. For example in the General Leadership aspect, teachers found it 'hard' to say that they desire to take a leadership role in the wider community, but found it 'easy' to say that they feel involved in school life and 'easy' to say that they initiate their own professional development, were optimistic, and felt sure of themselves at school. For the corresponding ideal modes, teachers indicated that they found it 'very easy' to say they would like to respond in the higher categories for these items. In other words, although the teachers found some items 'easy' in the real mode, the difference in 'difficulty' between the real and ideal modes of the items indicates that teachers would like to find these aspects of leadership easier than they do.

In the Communication aspect, teachers reported that they found it 'hard' to say that they were a confident public speaker about early childhood education, or that they were given positive feedback by other teachers, or asked questions about their philosophy by the children's parents. Teachers found it 'very hard' to say that they were asked questions about their philosophy by other teachers or by their principal. In the corresponding ideal mode, teachers indicated that they found it 'very easy' or 'easy' to say that they would like to respond in the higher categories for these aspects of leadership.

In the Influence aspect, teachers reported that they found it 'hard' to say that they made sure they were included in school decision-making, or that they try to change school policy, if it conflicted with their philosophy. They found it 'hard' to say that they tell the principal of their philosophy, or encourage the principal to be involved in their classroom. Teachers also found it 'hard' to say that they help the principal acquire more knowledge of early childhood education, or try to change the principal's attitude about early childhood education, if it conflicted with their own.

Where items had a corresponding ideal mode, teachers indicated that it was 'easy' to say they would like to respond in the higher categories for these aspects of leadership.

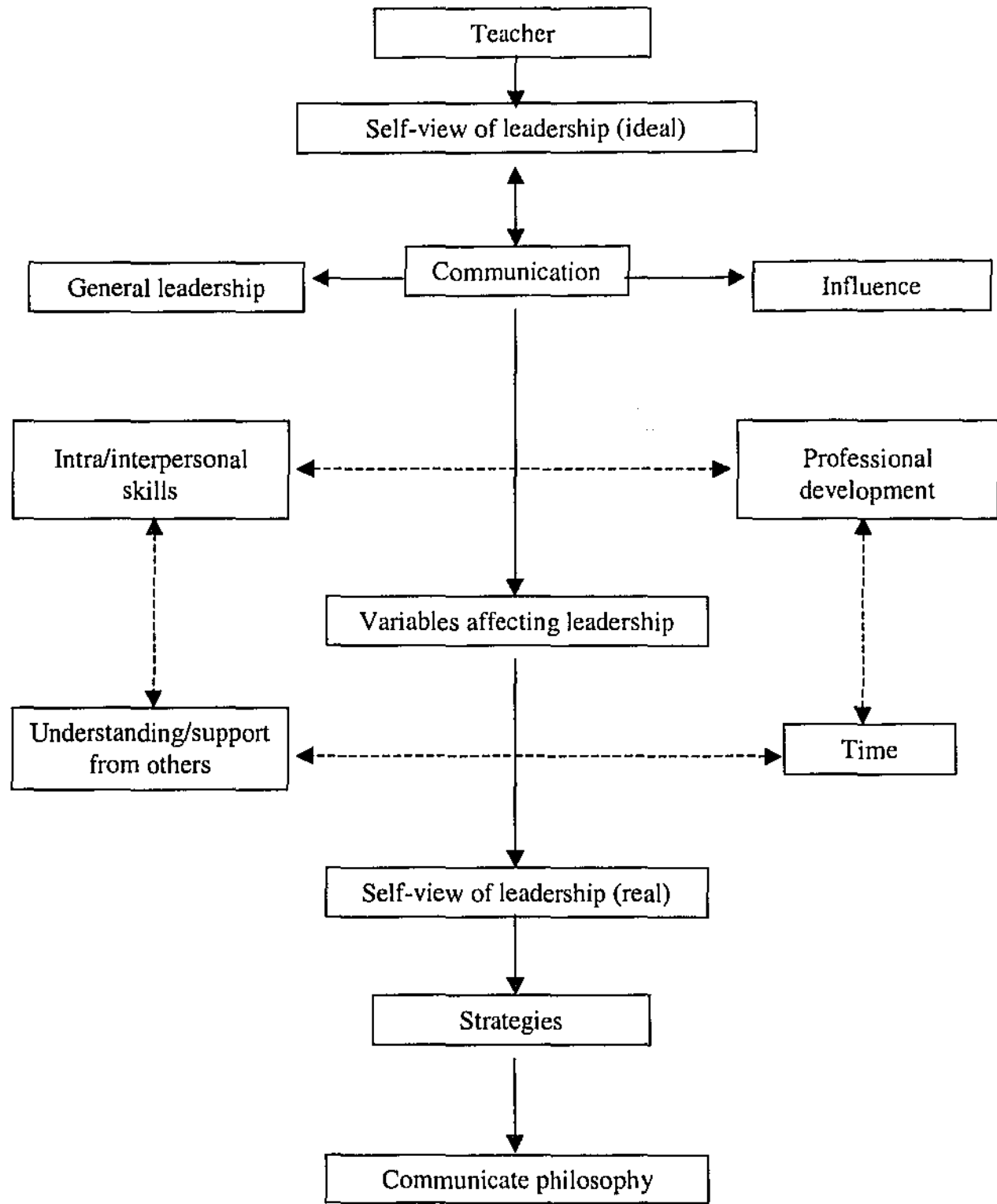
In general, the findings of this study indicated that early childhood teachers found it more difficult than they would like to enact leadership through articulating and communicating early childhood philosophy and pedagogy to others. In Phase Two of the study, teachers' perceptions were investigated and their views sought on what helped and hindered them in fulfilling this leadership role. Based on the findings from both Phase One and Two of this study, an attempt has been made to create a model of Early Childhood Teachers' self-views of their leadership role with regard to articulating and communicating early childhood pedagogy and philosophy (see Figure 12). In the attempt to simplify the model, the diagram is more linear than the researcher believes actually represents teachers' views. The complex interplay of factors is viewed as dynamic and a change (either of a supporting or hindering orientation) within one factor or variable affecting teacher leadership may affect one or more of the other factors, and hence the *real* perception of leadership.

The model depicts the variables that teachers reported enhanced or constrained their efforts in communicating their philosophy to others. In the process of representing the variables as an influence on teachers' leadership abilities (General Leadership, Communication and Influence aspects), the gap or differentiation between early childhood teachers' ideal and real self-views of leadership is highlighted.

The findings indicated that early childhood teachers hold an ideal view of their leadership roles, and in general, find it 'easy' or 'very easy' to hold high ideal self-views for most aspects of leadership including, General Leadership, Communication, and Influence on others. This indicates that teachers recognise the importance of leadership roles and would ideally like to enact most aspects of leadership with proficiency. However, early childhood teachers cited particular factors they believe can influence their abilities to enact these leadership roles. These were grouped broadly as their own intrapersonal and interpersonal skills, professional development, time, and the level of understanding and support from others. These factors are dynamic in nature thus subject to change, and can either enhance or constrain teachers' efforts to articulate and communicate their philosophy



to others. A change in one factor can bring about a change to a teacher's real self-view of leadership. A positive change may enhance the ability of a teacher to enact particular leadership roles, thus leading to a more positive self-view. Conversely, a negative change may constrain a teacher's ability to enact particular leadership roles, thus causing his or her self-view of leadership to become less positive.



**Figure 12:** Model of Early Childhood Teachers' Self-views of Leadership.  
Source: Developed by the author as a result of this study.

The model also reflects the possibility of a teacher's ideal self-view of leadership being subject to change. A change in one or more of the variables affecting leadership may alter a teacher's ideal self-view. For example, a teacher may hold an ideal self-view that they would like to take a leadership role in the wider education community none or almost none of the time. However, with a positive change in one or more of the variables affecting leadership, a teacher may alter his or her ideal self-view. For example, a teacher may develop stronger intrapersonal or interpersonal skills, undertake inspiring professional development, or receive support from a key person. As a result, the teacher may decide that he or she would like to take a leadership role in the wider education community all or nearly all the time, thus altering their ideal self-view of leadership.

As represented in the model, depending on the interplay of factors that can enhance or constrain teachers' efforts to articulate and communicate their philosophy, early childhood teachers can develop a real self-view of leadership from which they devise strategies to communicate their early childhood philosophy. Alternatively, or concurrently, teachers may also develop strategies according to their perceptions of the constraints or barriers they face, thus leading to the formation of their real self-view of leadership with regard to communicating their philosophy. Considered from this perspective, that teachers' self-views and variables affecting leadership are interdependent and subject to change, early childhood teachers' abilities to communicate their philosophy and pedagogy to others can also be subject to change. Positive changes within one or more of the variables affecting leadership may enhance teachers' abilities to communicate their early childhood philosophy to others, while negative changes within a variable may constrain teachers' abilities to communicate their early childhood philosophy.

## **Implications**

### **Implications for Administrators**

The findings from this study indicated that early childhood teachers believe the principal, children's parents and other teachers in the school do not value or understand early childhood education. In addition, the teachers reported their

confidence could be increased, in part, through support, recognition, positive feedback and respect from others. Given that the principal can exert influence over the school culture, and in order for early childhood programs to be respected and valued within the school, the principal would be well placed to show public support and understanding. This can be achieved, in part, through seeking early childhood practitioners' input in school decision-making, ensuring fair distribution of resources and through valuing, openly, the contribution that early childhood programs make to the school and the education of young children. In addition, it is suggested that principals need to treat early childhood teachers as "colleagues rather than subordinates" (Witcher, 2001, p. 89) to encourage and realise shared leadership and open sharing of ideas in the school.

It is equally important for administrators to acquire knowledge of appropriate programs for young children. A major role of principals is to support and empower teachers. For principals to fulfill this role with respect to early childhood teachers, they must first have a sound understanding of early childhood philosophy and pedagogy. However, principals may require support from the education system in order to acquire knowledge and understanding of early childhood education. Principals must also be willing to listen to the concerns and the views of early childhood staff and ensure they communicate openly, their respect and support for quality early childhood education to the staff.

The findings also indicated that the majority of early childhood teachers believe that they are not provided with enough opportunities to collaborate with other staff in the school. Collaboration among school staff has been identified as an essential element of school reform (Firestone, 1996; Hargreaves, 1994; Sergiovanni, 1990; Witcher, 2001). However, given the lack of support from the education system and government policies, there is a strong implication for principals to find innovative and creative ways in consultation with staff, to provide more opportunities for meaningful collaboration.

Early childhood teachers in the study reported that their professional confidence could be boosted by relevant professional development which they believe is difficult to access. They reported that most professional development experienced in the school context is whole-school development, with a primary philosophical orientation. It is suggested principals could provide more support to

early childhood staff in their endeavours to access professional development relevant to their needs. Again, principals in turn may need support in this endeavour from the education system. Principals could also guard against adopting the view that empowerment of teachers is a threat to their own leadership role. Rather, they could view early childhood teachers developing stronger leadership skills as a source of value-adding to the schools' overall quality as an educational provider, focussing on the needs of young children.

### **Implications for early childhood teachers**

Early childhood teachers in this study viewed the context within a primary school setting to be generally unsupportive of early childhood programs with many principals, children's parents and other teachers not understanding or valuing early childhood education. From this perspective, the implication is clear. Early childhood practitioners need to adopt stronger leadership roles and develop the skills necessary to articulate and communicate early childhood philosophy and pedagogy to others in the school setting. Doing so is essential in order to advocate for young children and appropriate programs, and to help others understand and acquire more knowledge about the early childhood way of teaching.

The need for persistence has been emphasised as a major element of leadership and advocacy (Barth, 2001; Gratz & Boulton, 1996; Sergiovanni, 1990; Taba et al., 1999) and it is essential that early childhood practitioners do not abandon their efforts through frustration, but rather, persevere in advocating for young children and the profession. It is suggested that, as the need arises, it is reasonable to expect teachers to allocate a portion of out of school hours to their advocacy role. Such advocacy can take various forms including communicating with parents or other staff, presenting information sessions, attending meetings of professional organisations or early childhood networks, and engaging in professional development. Early childhood teachers could also be active participants in school life. Being active participants can help them to become more aware of leadership opportunities. Ensuring participation in school decision-making and other activities can help raise their status within the school context and afford more opportunities to explain to others about the early childhood way of teaching.

The majority of early childhood teachers reported that they are not confident to communicate their philosophy to others and indicated a desire to develop stronger leadership skills. If early childhood teachers are not going to be provided with guidance to develop stronger leadership skills within the school context, they must find ways themselves. If teachers do not receive support from within the educational system to access professional development relevant to their needs, it is essential that they be proactive in seeking out sources themselves.

As a part of being proactive, early childhood educators could adopt a more internal locus of control, and reflect continually on their leadership roles, and the context within which they communicate their philosophy to others. Engaging in a critically reflective process could provide them with more understanding of themselves and others, and provide direction for their leadership roles in communicating the early childhood way of teaching to others. Part of the critically reflective process could involve addressing internalised norms such as a victim mentality (Cox, 1996) and being 'nice ladies' (Stonehouse, 1992), not wishing to encroach on or offend others as indicated in the present study through teachers' language and metaphors (see page 170). Further, early childhood teachers need to be prepared and ready to support their beliefs and appropriate programs with knowledge and research. They need to develop the confidence to articulate early childhood philosophy and pedagogy and possess the interpersonal skills to communicate it to others. In the words of Fullan (1994, p. 252), with reference to teachers working to improve the teaching profession, we won't "get there if we do not have stronger teachers leading the way".

### **Implications for teacher educators**

The findings of this study have highlighted the need for undergraduate and post graduate teachers to be provided with opportunities to develop their leadership potential through acquiring knowledge, skills and understanding of leadership roles to be adopted in the pursuit of advocating for young children and appropriate programs. Early childhood teachers in the study indicated they would like to develop stronger leadership skills. However, it seems that few have reflected on their leadership abilities, indicating they need help or guidance to reflect on their leadership roles with regard to advocating for young children and appropriate

programs, and in determining how to set about developing stronger leadership skills. It is suggested that many teachers have not adopted a 'third wave' perspective of leadership and thus are not aware that leadership roles can be assumed by teachers at any level of the educational setting. Specific leadership roles that early childhood teachers may adopt need to be made explicit at the undergraduate and post graduate levels.

The majority of early childhood teachers in this study reported that they believed more leadership skills development should be included in the pre-service and in-service training for teachers. Many reported the need for more practice at articulating and justifying early childhood philosophy and pedagogy, and more interpersonal skills development in the areas of confidence, assertion and interactions with adults. There is a strong implication for training bodies to listen to the voices of early childhood teachers and include specific leadership skills development in their programs and offer courses that meet the professional development needs of early childhood teachers. If such courses exist already, then it is suggested that greater promotion within schools is required with more liaison and negotiation between the provider, the Education Department and school administrators, to help teachers access relevant professional development.

### **Implications for further research**

The findings of the present study have contributed to knowledge of early childhood teacher leadership and provided further possibilities for the direction of future research in the field. The new Model of Early Childhood Teacher Leadership developed in the present study has enabled real and ideal items representing aspects of teacher leadership, to be linked together with teacher leadership measures to form a valid and reliable scale. However, the model can only be regarded as the beginning in this area and hence needs further testing and refinement. Subsequent versions of the scale of Teacher Leadership would be improved with testing in other countries and with the inclusion of further 'harder' items to better target early childhood teachers with high leadership measures. It may also be improved with alternative wording for some items, and extending the model beyond ideal and real self-views to include capability self-views, thus forming a Guttman pattern for each sub-set of items in the model (see *Improvements to the Model*, Chapter 7).

Further, the model could be expanded to include additional aspects of leadership. The present model is focussed on elements with respect to leadership in advocacy through communicating early childhood philosophy and pedagogy to others. Further aspects related to leadership in the literature, such as self-confidence and self-efficacy could be tested to see if they are predominantly influenced by the unidimensional trait of leadership. Gender and power relations are also highlighted in the literature as variables influencing leadership and this issue with respect to interpersonal relationships of early childhood teachers needs to be developed in the model. Further items encompassing gender need to be included or existing items in the model need to be reworded.

Given that early childhood teachers indicated they would like to develop stronger leadership skills, more research is needed to establish the best ways to help teachers acquire these skills. Research that informs the development of courses should stem from teachers' voices and courses developed in response to teachers' professional development needs should be evaluated in terms of their effectiveness, both long and short term.

Findings from this study indicate that future attempts at initiating change within the school system, with regard to how early childhood education is perceived, must incorporate all interlocking contexts within which teachers work. To raise the status of early childhood education, and for it to become a respected and valued part of the school, support must be embedded within each context. Early childhood teachers alone, through developing stronger intrapersonal, interpersonal and general leadership skills cannot effect change in the way others perceive early childhood education. Teachers need support and respect from the principal and principals need support from the education system to enable them to acquire more knowledge about early childhood philosophy and pedagogy. In turn, the education system needs support at the policy level, which is determined largely by government policy and budget restrictions. The importance of support at the policy level was highlighted by Tayler in Tayler, Diezmann and Broughton (2000, p. 74) with the assertion that "to foster the kind of curriculum and pedagogy advocated for young children, an infrastructure of supportive policies and practices is necessary".

The interlocking contexts in which teachers work are recognised as interdependent and dynamic in nature as one context exerts influence over another.

However, change in one context will not ensure change is effected throughout all other contexts. To date, change in schools has been likened by Toll (2001, p. 345) to “a bird flying at a window”. To engender a desired change in attitude towards early childhood education within schools a collaborative effort is required in which action is taken, and support provided, across the interlocking contexts. These contexts include teachers as an individual context (including intrapersonal, interpersonal and leadership skills); the classroom; the school; the school community; the education system (including teacher training institutions); the broader community; and government contexts.

Whilst much has been written on the low status of preprimary grades within the school context, it is suggested that further research can seek to identify contexts in which early childhood education is valued. Through exploring the success stories in schools, and identifying the supportive elements or structures behind these successes, further insights may be gained on engendering change with a view to raising the status of, and gaining respect for, early childhood education. From another perspective, Toll (2001) suggested that future research should look at ‘lasting’ school change through the lenses of critical theory and postmodernism, with a focus on power and difference within the interlocking contexts of government, education and schools, to provide new understandings.



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## **Appendix A: Questionnaire and follow-up letter**

Dear Colleague

I am conducting research into Kindergarten /Preprimary teachers' perceptions of their leadership role and self-concept. Leadership in this context includes teachers' abilities to articulate and communicate early childhood pedagogy and philosophy. The research has EDWA approval and is supervised by Dr Loraine Corrie, Faculty of Education, Edith Cowan University.

ECE is often regarded as having the lowest status in the education system. It is believed that recent government reforms based on financial rather than educational concerns are an attempt to eliminate expensive differences between preprimary and primary grades. In face of these declines in status, conditions and appropriate resources, leadership skills in the form of articulating and communicating ECE pedagogy and philosophy have become important.

The enclosed questionnaire has three sections and takes about thirty minutes to complete. Taking the time to complete this questionnaire will contribute to knowledge about leadership in ECE. It is expected that this research will be valuable to the cause of ECE by gathering knowledge about teachers' perceptions of their leadership roles and identifying factors that help or hinder ECE teachers' abilities to articulate and communicate their pedagogy and philosophy. Through gaining more knowledge and understanding, we will be in a better position to be proactive about leadership in ECE.

No names are required on the questionnaire and individuals will remain anonymous. The findings will only be published as group statistics. Completion of the questionnaire is taken as informed consent based on the conditions mentioned above.

Please return the completed questionnaire in the stamped addressed envelope within two weeks.

If you have any questions about the research I can be contacted on (phone number).

Thank you in anticipation for your cooperation and participation. It is greatly appreciated.

Glenda Boyd

## SECTION A Biographic information

Directions: Please tick the appropriate box or write a response in the space provided.

1. Gender Male ☐ Female ☐
2. Number of years you have been teaching in early childhood education \_\_\_\_\_
3. Number of years in your present school /centre \_\_\_\_\_
4. Your teaching position Country ☐ or Metropolitan ☐ K ☐ or PP ☐
5. Your K /PP centre /room On site ☐ Off site ☐
6. Number of K /PP teachers in your school /centre \_\_\_\_\_
7. Gender of your principal Male ☐ Female ☐
8. If a member of any professional organization/s, please name \_\_\_\_\_
9. Your tertiary qualification/s

qualification	year obtained	institution
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## SECTION B Teacher leadership

Directions: Please rate each statement according to the following response format and place a number corresponding to **how you would like to be** and **how you believe that you are** on the appropriate line opposite each statement.

- |   |       |
|---|-------|
| All the time or nearly all the time         | put 3 |
| Most of the time                            | put 2 |
| Some of the time                            | put 1 |
| None of the time or almost none of the time | put 0 |

Example

If your leadership characteristic, **how you would like to be** is that you would be able to handle a crisis well **all the time**, put 3. If in practice (**how you actually are**) you handle a crisis well **some of the time**, put 1.

Item 1	Handle a crisis well		
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	1	3	
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	How I am	How I would like to be	
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		All the time or nearly all the time Most of the time Some of the time None of the time or almost none of the time	put 3 put 2 put 1 put 0	How I am	How I would like to be
<b>General Leadership</b>					
<b>Classroom leadership</b>					
½	I handle a classroom crisis well			....	....
¾	I set clear standards			....	....
5/6	I am willing to take calculated risks			....	....
7/8	I share decision making			....	....
9/10	I convey clear role responsibilities to other staff			....	....
11/12	I motivate and inspire other staff to do their best			....	....
13/14	I take a leadership role			....	....
<b>Self leadership</b>					
15/16	I set clear goals			....	....
17/18	I am proactive rather than reactive (initiating rather than responding)			....	....
19/20	I stand up for what I believe in			....	....
21/22	I achieve what I set out to achieve			....	....
23/24	I know my own strengths			....	....
25/26	I know my own weaknesses			....	....
27/28	I am a confident person			....	....
29/30	I am an assertive person			....	....
31/32	I am an optimistic person			....	....
<b>Program leadership</b>					
33/34	I am proud of my achievements at school			....	....
35/36	I am satisfied with my programming			....	....
37/38	I am satisfied with my record keeping			....	....
39/40	I feel good about the work I do at school			....	....
41/42	I feel involved in school life			....	....
43/44	I have a good rapport with ECE staff I work with			....	....
45/46	I have a good rapport with other staff at my school			....	....
47/48	I am sure of myself at school			....	....
49/50	I feel I am viewed as an equal by colleagues of my sex			....	....
51/52	I feel I am viewed as an equal by colleagues of the opposite sex			....	....



	All the time or nearly all the time Most of the time Some of the time None of the time or almost none of the time	put 3 put 2 put 1 put 0	How I am	How I would like to be
<b>School leadership</b>				
53/54	I implement a developmentally appropriate program		....	....
55/56	I reflect on my own teaching practice		....	....
57/58	I advocate for early childhood teaching philosophy		....	....
59/60	I initiate my own professional development		....	....
61/62	I am willing to be involved in extra curricula activities		....	....
63/64	I look for ways to improve my teaching practice		....	....
65/66	I feel in control of what happens in my classroom		....	....
67/68	I keep up to date with latest developments in ECE		....	....
69/70	I implement a child initiated program		....	....
71/72	I desire to take a leadership role in the classroom		....	....
73/74	I desire to take a leadership role in the wider education community		....	....
<b>Communication</b>				
<b>From me to parents /teachers /principal</b>				
75/76	I communicate effectively with the principal		....	....
77/78	I am a confident public speaker about ECE		....	....
79/80	I can argue my point of view strongly with the principal		....	....
81/82	I can argue my point of view strongly with children's parents		....	....
83/84	I can argue my point of view strongly with other school staff		....	....
85/86	I can argue my point of view easier with same sex persons than with opposite sex persons		....	....
87/88	I am confident to explain to children's parents about the early childhood way of teaching		....	....
89/90	I am confident to explain to other school staff about the early childhood way of teaching		....	....
91/92	I am confident to explain to the principal about the early childhood way of teaching		....	....
93/94	I feel more comfortable talking to persons my sex than persons of the opposite sex		....	....
95/96	I have good communication skills		....	....

	All the time or nearly all the time	put 3		
	Most of the time	put 2		
	Some of the time	put 1	How I am	How I would like to be
	None of the time or almost none of the time	put 0		

### From parents /teachers /principal to me

97/98	I am given positive feedback for my program by children's parents	....	....
99/100	I am given positive feedback for my program by other teachers	....	....
101/102	I am given positive feedback for my program by my principal	....	....
103/104	Preprimary staff look to me for leadership in ECE	....	....
105/106	My principal looks to me for leadership in ECE	....	....
107/108	I am praised for particular projects by children's parents	....	....
109/110	I am praised for particular projects by other teachers	....	....
111/112	I am praised for particular projects by my principal	....	....
113/114	I am asked questions about my philosophy by children's parents	....	....
115/116	I am asked questions about my philosophy by other teachers	....	....
117/118	I am asked questions about my philosophy by my principal	....	....

### Influences

#### My influence on the school

119/120	I make sure I am included in school decision making	....	....
121/122	If necessary I would push for male and female staff to have equal say in decision making in my school	....	....
123/124	I feel comfortable in the school staff room	....	....
125/126	I feel I am a valued member of school staff	....	....
127/128	If necessary I would push for preprimary staff to share equal status with primary staff in my school	....	....
129/130	I encourage others to do things consistent with my early childhood philosophy	....	....
131/132	I would try to change school policy if it conflicts with my philosophy	....	....

#### My influence on the principal

133/134	I tell the principal of my early childhood philosophy	....	....
135/136	I encourage the principal to be involved in what happens in my classroom	....	....
137/138	I encourage the principal to support my early childhood philosophy	....	....
139/140	I would try to change my principal's attitude about ECE, where it conflicts with mine	....	....
141/142	I try to help the principal acquire more knowledge about ECE	....	....

## SECTION C

Teachers say there are various factors that help or hinder their efforts to explain to others about early childhood philosophy. Please reflect on your *past* or *present* experience and outline the factors that have helped or hindered you to explain early childhood philosophy.

- a. Factors that **help** me to **explain** about the early childhood way of teaching to the following people include:

Principal -

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Children's parents -

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Other teachers -

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- b. Factors that **hinder** my **explaining** about the early childhood way of teaching to the following people include:

Principal-

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Children's parents-

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Other teachers -

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- c. Strategies I use to tell the following people about the early childhood way of teaching include:

Principal -

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Children's parents -

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Other teachers -

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- d. Please make any further comments you have about leadership in K /PP, in particular, leadership with regard to explaining early childhood philosophy.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. It is greatly appreciated.  
Glenda Boyd

## **Follow-up letter to questionnaire**

Dear colleagues,

Recently, a survey questionnaire on early childhood teachers' perceptions of their self-concept and leadership roles was sent to you.

If you have completed and returned the questionnaire, I thank you sincerely for your time and effort. Your contribution is valued and you will help further knowledge in early childhood education.

If you have yet to complete the questionnaire, I wish to reiterate how appreciative I would be of your response. The quality of data obtained from this questionnaire will depend largely on a high return rate.

I realize you will become increasingly busy at this time of the year, but appeal to your professionalism and kindness and ask that you support research into ECE by completing and returning the questionnaire.

If you did not receive a questionnaire but would like one, or if you are willing to be involved further by participating in an interview, please contact me on 9317 2675.

Thanking you in anticipation of your support.  
Yours sincerely

Glenda Boyd.

## Appendix B: Questionnaire fit and non-fit of teacher leadership items

		All the time or nearly all the time Most of the time Some of the time None of the time or almost none of the time	put 4 put 3 put 2 put 1	How I am (real)	How I would like to be (ideal)
<b>General Leadership</b>					
<b>Classroom leadership</b>					
1-2	I handle a classroom crisis well			No fit	-2.190
3-4	I set clear standards			No fit	-2.056
5-6	I am willing to take calculated risks			No fit	-0.043
7-8	I share decision making			No fit	No fit
9-10	I convey clear role responsibilities to other staff			+0.851	-1.601
11-12	I motivate and inspire other staff to do their best			No fit	-1.423
13-14	I take a leadership role			+1.581	-0.892
<b>Self-leadership</b>					
15-16	I set clear goals			-0.437	No fit
17-18	I am proactive rather than reactive (initiating rather than responding)			+0.493	No fit
19-20	I stand up for what I believe in			No fit	-1.621
21-22	I achieve what I set out to achieve			-0.329	-1.602
23-24	I know my own strengths			No fit	-1.785
25-26	I know my own weaknesses			No fit	-1.723
27-28	I am a confident person			No fit	-1.835
29-30	I am an assertive person			No fit	-1.288
31-32	I am an optimistic person			+0.166	-1.787
<b>Program leadership</b>					
33-34	I am proud of my achievements at school			-0.733	-1.910
35-36	I am satisfied with my programming			No fit	No fit
37-38	I am satisfied with my record keeping			+1.771	-1.923
39-40	I feel good about the work I do at school			No fit	-2.294
41-42	I feel involved in school life			+1.841	-1.161
43-44	I have a good rapport with ECE staff I work with			No fit	-1.967
45-46	I have a good rapport with other staff at my school			No fit	-1.736
47-48	I am sure of myself at school			+0.794	-1.853
49-50	I feel I am viewed as an equal by colleagues of my sex			No fit	-2.171
51-52	I feel I am viewed as an equal by colleagues of the opposite sex			No fit	-1.923

**School leadership**

53-54	I implement a developmentally appropriate program	No fit	-2.046
55-56	I reflect on my own teaching practice	No fit	-2.082
57-58	I advocate for early childhood teaching philosophy	No fit	-2.186
59-60	I initiate my own professional development	+0.489	-1.343
61-62	I am willing to be involved in extra curricula activities	No fit	-0.181
63-64	I look for ways to improve my teaching practice	-0.779	-1.611
65-66	I feel in control of what happens in my classroom	No fit	-1.781
67-68	I keep up to date with latest developments in ECE	No fit	-1.495
69-70	I implement a child initiated program	No fit	No fit
71-72	I desire to take a leadership role in the classroom	No fit	No fit
73-74	I desire to take a leadership role in the wider education community	+3.361	+2.017

**Communication****From me to parents /teachers/ principal**

75-76	I communicate effectively with the principal	+0.881	-1.767
77-78	I am a confident public speaker about ECE	+2.220	-0.260
79-80	I can argue my point of view strongly with the principal	+1.773	No fit
81-82	I can argue my point of view strongly with children's parents	+0.413	-0.759
83-84	I can argue my point of view strongly with other school staff	+1.541	-0.741
85-86	I can argue my point of view easier with same sex persons than with opposite sex persons	No fit	No fit
87-88	I am confident to explain to children's parents about the early childhood way of teaching	-0.278	-2.188
89-90	I am confident to explain to other school staff about the early childhood way of teaching	+0.858	-2.055
91-92	I am confident to explain to the principal about the early childhood way of teaching	+0.942	-2.099
93-94	I feel more comfortable talking to persons my sex than persons of the opposite sex	No fit	No fit
95-96	I have good communication skills	+0.684	-2.074

### From parents /teachers /principal to me

97-98	I am given positive feedback for my program by children's parents	No fit	-1.272
99-100	I am given positive feedback for my program by other teachers	+2.634	-0.302
101-102	I am given positive feedback for my program by my principal	No fit	No fit
103-104	Preprimary staff look to me for leadership in ECE	+2.614	No fit
105-106	My principal looks to me for leadership in ECE	No fit	No fit
107-108	I am praised for particular projects by children's parents	+1.611	No fit
109-110	I am praised for particular projects by other teachers	+2.674	-0.747
111-112	I am praised for particular projects by my principal	No fit	+0.207
113-114	I am asked questions about my philosophy by children's parents	+3.297	No fit
115-116	I am asked questions about my philosophy by other teachers	+4.421	+1.558
117-118	I am asked questions about my philosophy by my principal	+4.178	+1.588

### Influences

#### My influence on the school

119-120	I make sure I am included in school decision making	+2.006	No fit
121-122	If necessary I would push for male and female staff to have equal say in decision making in my school	No fit	No fit
123-124	I feel comfortable in the school staff room	No fit	-1.524
125-126	I feel I am a valued member of school staff	No fit	-1.621
127-128	If necessary I would push for preprimary staff to share equal status with primary staff in my school	+0.956	-0.852
129-130	I encourage others to do things consistent with my early childhood philosophy	+1.945	+0.835
131-132	I would try to change school policy if it conflicts with my philosophy	+2.117	+0.702

#### My influence on the principal

133-134	I tell the principal of my early childhood philosophy	+2.470	+0.766
135-136	I encourage the principal to be involved in what happens in my classroom	+2.224	+0.456
137-138	I encourage the principal to support my early childhood philosophy	+1.871	No fit
139-140	I would try to change my principal's attitude about ECE, where it conflicts with mine	+2.137	+0.347
141-142	I try to help the principal acquire more knowledge about ECE	+3.035	+1.004

### Notes on Appendix B

1. The item difficulties are in logits (the log odds of answering the response categories positively). The item 'difficulties' range from -2.294 which is 'extremely easy' to +4.241 which is 'extremely hard'.
2. Of the 142 items, 92 fit the measurement model to produce a proper interval -level scale (item 'difficulties' in bold) with a predominant unidimensional influence.
3. 38 real and 54 corresponding ideal items fit the measurement model to form the scale of Early Childhood Teacher Leadership.
4. Most ideal items are 'easier' than the real items, as conceptualised at the outset.



# Appendix C: Teacher Leadership scores and item 'difficulties'

LOCATION	PERSONS	ITEMS [uncentralised thresholds]									
7.0			I0115.2								
6.0	X		I0117.2								
	X		I0073.2								
	XXX		I0113.2								
5.0	XXXX		I0037.2								
	XX										
	X		I0103.2	I0109.2	I0141.2						
	XXXX		I0099.2								
	XXXX		I0021.2	I0017.2	I0077.2						
4.0	XXXX		I0119.2	I0133.2	I0009.2	I0135.2					
	XXX		I0129.2	I0013.2	I0139.2	I0041.2	I0079.2	I0083.2			
			I0131.2	I0095.2							
	XXXXXXX		I0107.2	I0137.2							
	XXXXXX		I0118.2	I0074.2	I0116.2	I0047.2	I0015.2				
	XXXXXXX		I0075.2								
3.0	XXXXXXXXXXXX		I0091.2	I0081.2	I0089.2	I0031.2					
	XXXXXXXXXXXX										
	XXXXXXXXXXXX		I0033.2	I0059.2	I0110.2						
	XXXXXXXXXXXX		I0136.2	I0112.2	I0142.2						
	XXXXXXXXXXXX		I0115.1	I0063.2							
2.0	XXXXXX		I0130.2	I0087.2	I0134.2	I0014.2	I0062.2	I0117.1			
			I0127.2								
	XXXXXXXXXXXX		I0132.2	I0140.2							
	XXXX		I0006.2	I0100.2							
	XXXXXXX		I0141.1								
	XXXXXX		I0073.1	I0113.1	I0042.2						
1.0	XXX		I0030.2								
	X		I0099.1	I0133.1	I0098.2	I0078.2					
	X		I0103.1	I0060.2	I0109.1						
	XX		I0139.1	I0012.2	I0124.2	I0084.2	I0068.2	I0074.1			
	X		I0064.2	I0135.1	I0131.1	I0020.2	I0126.2				
0.0	X		I0032.2	I0077.1	I0129.1	I0137.1	I0128.2	I0022.2			
			I0082.2	I0010.2	I0048.2	I0026.2	I0046.2	I0119.1			
			I0107.1	I0116.1	I0079.1	I0034.2	I0127.1	I0066.2			
			I0076.2	I0118.1	I0041.1	I0028.2					
			I0038.2	I0132.1	I0142.1	I0024.2	I0130.1	I0052.2			
			I0092.2	I0013.1	I0096.2	I0044.2	I0090.2	I0134.1			
-1.0			I0088.2	I0050.2	I0058.2	I0056.2	I0083.1				
			I0091.1	I0002.2	I0004.2						
			I0089.1	I0040.2	I0140.1	I0054.2					
			I0037.1	I0078.1	I0136.1	I0075.1					
			I0082.1	I0059.1							
-2.0			I0112.1	I0084.1	I0047.1	I0128.1	I0006.1				
			I0009.1	I0100.1	I0081.1						
			I0095.1	I0062.1							
			I0087.1								
-3.0			I0004.1	I0054.1	I0031.1						
			I0024.1	I0010.1							
			I0060.1	I0022.1	I0012.1	I0066.1	I0026.1	I0056.1			
			I0044.1	I0076.1	I0038.1	I0017.1	I0040.1	I0002.1			
			I0020.1	I0032.1	I0048.1	I0124.1	I0068.1	I0090.1	I0096.1		
			I0034.1	I0058.1	I0064.1	I0092.1	I0098.1	I0028.1	I0052.1		
			I0050.1	I0088.1	I0046.1						
			I0042.1	I0126.1	I0030.1						
-4.0			I0063.1	I0014.1							
			I0110.1	I0033.1							
			I0015.1								
-5.0			I0021.1								

X = 2 Persons

Graph of Teacher Leadership scores and item threshold 'difficulties' on the same scale (in logits)

Notes on graph (Appendix C)

1. The scale is in logits, the log odds of answering the response categories (about -5.0 to +6.4 logits).
2. Teacher Leadership measures are placed on the LHS of the scale and item thresholds (item 'difficulties') are placed on the RHS of the scale. Item thresholds relating to the **Real mode (How I am) are in bold**. The results indicate that the real thresholds are more or less evenly distributed along the scale, whereas the ideal thresholds are mostly at the 'easy' end of the scale.
3. I0115.2 refers to the threshold between the response categories 1 and 2 for item 115; I0115.1 refers to the threshold between the response categories 0 and 1 for the same item. These thresholds are ordered I0115.1 is 'easiest' ('difficulty' is 2.2 logits), I0115.2 is 'harder' ('difficulty' is 6.3 logits), in line with the ordering of the response categories. Other item thresholds are labeled similarly.

## **Appendix D: Information statement and consent for interview**

### **INFORMATION STATEMENT AND CONSENT FOR INTERVIEW**

The purpose of this interview, which is expected to take about 50 minutes, is to obtain information about early childhood teachers' perceptions of their leadership roles.

As an early childhood teacher, you are in a position to describe what you see are important issues of leadership in ECE and what helps or hinders your articulation and communication of early childhood philosophy and pedagogy.

The responses from all the people that are interviewed will be combined. Nothing you say will ever be identified with you personally. As we go through the interview, please feel free to ask questions about any aspect or to say if you would rather not answer a question. In addition, you have the right to withdraw from the interview at any time.

I don't want to take the chance of relying on my notes and miss something you say, so I'd like your permission to use a tape recorder. You will maintain the right to turn off the recorder at any point during the interview.

If you have any questions or would like further information at a later date, I can be contacted on (phone number). Alternatively, you can contact my supervisor Dr Loraine Corrie at Edith Cowan University on (phone number).

Thank you for your time, it is much appreciated.

Glenda Boyd

.....

I have read the information above and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.

I give my consent to be interviewed based on the conditions described above, and realize that I may withdraw at any time.

Participant \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix E: Interview questions**

1. How long have you been teaching in early childhood education?
2. From the research we've done so far, many teachers said they would like to have stronger leadership skills such as being more assertive, confident, and being able to articulate their philosophy. How important do you think these leadership skills are to your role as teacher?
3. Teachers mentioned various strategies that helped them communicate their philosophy. The most common were informal strategies such as chats, getting others to visit the PP and involving themselves in whole school activities and planning. What are your thoughts on such strategies?
4. Most of the strategies suggested by teachers involve interpersonal skills. How much do you think your interpersonal skills influence how well you communicate your philosophy?  
Prompt: can you give me an example of when interpersonal skills can be really important?
5. Some teachers said they lacked self confidence and find it hard to talk about early childhood practice. What sort of situations at school have made you feel like you lacked confidence?
6. What sort of situations at school have made you feel most confident?
7. How do you think a teacher's professional confidence can best be increased?
8. Some teachers said their principal doesn't understand or value ECE. What has been your experience?  
prompt: some teachers say their principal's personality or leadership style affects how well they can communicate their philosophy. What's your experience?
9. Teachers have said that some parents don't understand or value ECE. What has been your experience?

10. Some teachers said that other teachers in the school don't understand or value ECE. What has been your experience?
11. How do you think we can best educate others about the early childhood way of teaching?
12. Schools are busy places and sometimes finding time to talk about early childhood practices seems too difficult. How is the issue of time for you?
13. Do you see any ways in which the issue of time can be overcome to communicate more with  
Principal?  
Parents?  
Other teachers?
14. Some teachers mentioned they were battle weary or tired of justifying /explaining EC pedagogy or philosophy, or really seeing no point in doing so. What is your experience?
15. Some teachers said they saw no need to communicate their philosophy – that no one had ever asks them about it. What do you think about this?
16. Some teachers said they were confident and found it easy to talk about their philosophy. Do you feel this way?  
Prompt: Do you know any teacher like this? What do you think makes it work for them and not others?
17. What do you think could be added to teacher training that would help ECE teachers develop stronger leadership skills?
18. What about PD for teachers? What would be the best way to help you develop stronger leadership skills?
19. Some teachers said that completing the questionnaire was a learning experience for them, forcing them to reflect on some important issues. Has participating in this interview caused you to reflect on some issues you would not normally think about in much depth?
20. That's all the questions I wanted to ask you. Is there anything else that I've missed covering in the questions that you think is important?